

THE FATE OF THE FRENCH NON-COMMUNIST LEFT

E. DREXEL GODFREY, JR.
Williams College

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Doubleday Short Studies in Political Science

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By E. DREXEL GODFREY, JR.

Williams College



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Editor's Foreword

The Doubleday Short Studies in Political Science series has been fortunate that its participating authors have not only employed their skills to fulfill specific needs for materials in political science but have made contributions substantially beyond the immediate subjects they have discussed. Professor Godfrey, a young political scientist on the faculty of Williams College, exemplifies and strengthens this precedent. Though the title of his study seems to imply a rather narrow focus, this implication is in fact misleading.

Obviously the political fate of what is here called "the non-Communist left" in *any* country—particularly any *Western* country—is of great significance. Given the transcendent importance of France in Western Europe, and in the free world generally, Professor Godfrey's pungent analysis of what has happened to French non-Communist political forces and the reasons for it carries its own justification. Such an analysis, however, is not only timely, but constitutes an authoritative and valuable addition to the growing literature on French politics by American social scientists. Thus this study is a natural complement to Professor Furniss's *France: Keystone of Western Defense* (Doubleday Short Studies in Political Science No. 3). Taken together, the two provide a reliable and enduring basis for a better understanding of certain internal and external difficulties which continue to plague French policies. It is well known, of course, that these difficulties are interrelated. What has been too often lacking is a calm appraisal of *the underlying nature* of the difficulties and *how* they are related.

Combining detailed historical perspective and an appreciation for the subtleties of some characteristic patterns of French thinking, the pages which follow trace the impact of the Russian Revolution of 1917 on the development of left-wing groups in France. This represented one kind of external factor operating first in a particular internal context and later through the successive stages of political-institutional changes culminating in the Fourth Republic. The destinies of the latter are shown clearly to have been importantly influenced by the deep schism in the Socialist and trade unionist movements brought about by the powerful Communist organization. On the other hand, as the author also clearly shows, the more recent form of the external factor expressed now in terms of Soviet foreign policy and a divided atomic world has had at least a two-fold impact: first, the original schism has had further and more complicated

effects on French domestic politics; and second, France's unity and political effectiveness have in turn affected her response to the Soviet challenge and to foreign policy problems generally. One result of this is a kind of vicious circle: a coherent set of policies—domestic and foreign—depend in part upon a fundamental alteration of the strength and strategies of the non-Communist left which in turn seems to depend on an alteration of some of the very conditions with which the policies have to cope. The same factors requiring coherence and effectiveness help to render them difficult, if not improbable.

To shift from the contemporary political scene, it may be said that this is an essay on ideology, on one complex aspect of one nation's total political ideology. Hence it concerns the history of political theories held by certain key groups. The study also describes and analyzes a social movement having several related components—the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the trade unions. Two kinds of historical treatment emerge: of ideas in themselves and of group organization and activity—in other words, both intellectual and political history. Both are done with economy and sufficient thoroughness to warrant firm as well as tentative conclusions. Chapters One and Two dealing respectively with the ideological heritage of the French non-Communist left and the labor movement per se, tell separate stories which are later merged to great effect in the analysis of recent trends and problems.

Political ideology and social movement flow together in what may be honestly called an essay in the relationship between ideas and behavior. Since the author discusses *French* political thinking, it seems particularly necessary to alert the reader to the social-psychological aspects of ideological conflicts in that country. Ideas are argued about almost as an isolated mental exercise without relevance to political action or to actual social conditions. Naturally, this point has not escaped the notice of students of French politics. Perhaps it has become a cliché. Nevertheless, in the pages which follow, Professor Godfrey elaborates, and takes a fresh view of, the way in which this well known quality of French political life has actually produced enormously significant consequences.

Nor do the implications of characterizing this as a study of the role of ideas in social action end here. Many Frenchmen—including non-Communist left leaders—are able to live, or do in fact live, in an unreal political world. Not only do political ideas serve as counters and symbols in a game played for its own sake, but they serve to relate the individual to his political environment. Apparently, one reason for the weaknesses of the non-Communist left groups has been the inability to correlate doctrinal disputes to the needs for effective party strategy and the shocking gap between pure doctrinal principles and concrete election issues. Coalitions are difficult enough under any political system and especially under the French multiparty type. But the continuance of philosophical battles un-

related to popular needs and glaring social inequities and the inability to articulate ideological differences as a preliminary to durable interparty unity on techniques and programs renders the French system even more uncertain. Therefore ideas have both blinded and divided.

It is not revealing any of the author's fruitful conclusions to say that the anti-Communist yet pro-democratic Socialist forces in France have been handicapped by their belief system for two additional reasons. First, non-Communist party leaders have tended to be "quoters of scripture" and "preachers of dogma" rather than militant organizers and vote-getters. In the realm of practical politics, the Communists have proved immensely superior. Second, in going back to the "old faith" of past revolutions, it has been practically impossible for the non-Communist leadership to choose the most enduring features of this radical ideological heritage and to translate these into attractive, reasonably accurate, and concrete political appeals or criteria for judging prevailing social balances and developments. There is much more substance and variety to the factors which seem to explain the postwar political fate of the Socialist and labor union forces in France than can be indicated so briefly. Professor Godfrey has used this focus of analysis to pull together many interrelated institutional and non-institutional phases of French politics. The general points hinted at in this introduction are amplified and formulated more precisely according to the multiple political groups and organizations which comprise the non-Communist left. Trends and names are skillfully handled so that a "confused portrait of French confusion" which might repel many readers is neatly avoided.

To whet the reader's appetite further, some pertinent questions may be suggested: What factors account for the inherent ambivalence in the development of the non-Communist left? What was the net influence of Marxism on its ideological heritage? What are the chief doctrinal disputes within the socialist and labor groups? Why did not the "Popular Front" emerge as a dominant force to counter the Communists in the postwar period? Why has the Socialist Party lost its mass appeal? Why have the non-Communist unions not assumed a stronger role in French politics? What factors keep non-Communist forces disunited? Why are the Communists stronger politically?

These questions—and others—go to the heart of this study. They bear upon larger questions such as the capacity of the French government to serve its people's broad needs and the probability of the emergence of premiers potentially capable of stable, enthusiastic support inside and outside the formal structure of government. Professor Godfrey has transformed what might have been an interesting historical exercise into an insightful and illuminating analysis having immediate and long range implications.

RICHARD C. SNYDER

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Preface

The slimness of this volume belies the fact that the writer was aided every step of the way by friends and colleagues. Much of the material here presented was originally gathered in France on Fulbright and Social Science Research Council fellowships secured through the generous intercession of Professors Harold Sprout and William Ebenstein of Princeton. To the latter and Richard Snyder I owe much gratitude for patient counsel and wise criticism in determining the scope and fashioning the general design of the whole work. Professor Val Lorwin of Chicago gave much of his precious time in France to initiate this fledgling into the mysteries of modern syndicalism. Neither his keen insights nor his warm hospitality can be forgotten.

I would like also to thank my colleagues at Williams, Frederick Schuman and William Brubeck, for reading some parts of the manuscript and contributing useful criticism. Finally, I wish to express gratitude to my two typists, Miss Bessie Wright of Williamstown and Mrs. Gus Anderson of Wellfleet, for their cheerful cooperation through several drafts and innumerable postscripts.

The Editors of *The Antioch Review* have graciously permitted me to use in Chapter Seven data which originally appeared in an article written for the Summer 1954 number of the *Review*.

E. DREXEL GODFREY, JR.

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Introduction

This is a study in doctrinal intransigence. It concerns the fetters of political tradition and philosophical dogma which surround and threaten to choke two living organizations. The essay is offered as a partial explanation of the current weakness of that sector of French political society known as the non-Communist left.

The anemia of the only forces in France that could counter the strident postwar power of the French Communists has puzzled and pained all Western observers. Especially baffling is the unfavorable contrast with healthier movements of a similar nature in England, Scandinavia, Belgium, and Germany. The two principal organizations which are examined here, the Socialist Party (SFIO) and the Workers Force Union (CGTFO), both have deep taproots in the revolutionary tradition. They boast honorable family histories of militancy on the left—a must for most French political movements. In postwar France, however, they have been constantly reduced in stature and strength while Communism and its organs threaten to appropriate all the luster of the “left” label.

The more obvious consequences of this weakness are well known. By failing to provide a strong base for effective political direction of social reform the non-Communist left has contributed to the notorious parliamentary immobilisme of the Fourth Republic. Furthermore, reduced strength has meant the weakening of international, or at least trans-European, efforts at integration. The existence of strong Socialist parties and labor movements in all of West Europe undoubtedly would have stiffened the resolve of Socialist statesmen to take the lead in drafting blueprints for the new Europe. At the least it would have served to lessen the hostility from leftist oppositions in Britain and Germany to the timid forms of integration now operating.

At the conclusion of World War II there were great expectations for the non-Communist left. A few short days following his return to France in May 1945 after five years of Nazi imprisonment, the late Léon Blum excitedly told a meeting of Socialist Party workers:

Socialism is at the crossroads, at the coincidence of all the great currents which are today sweeping not only France but Europe and the whole world. . . . Who does not say he is Socialist? Who does not hail socialism? The word “socialism” has entered the vocabulary of all the parties.*

* At Conference of Confederal Secretaries, SFIO, Montrouge, May 21, 1945, reported in *Le Populaire*, 22 May 1945.

Many agreed with the ex-premier, but their faith was misplaced. On the assumption that Blum was speaking of "his kind of socialism," and could be said to represent even those of a non-Communist but leftist persuasion who did not vote with his party or belong to it, we will attempt to discover wherein and why his prophecy rang hollow.

Communist pressure on the non-Communist left is only indirectly involved in this inquiry. The central problem is the inadequacy—the errors and shortsightedness—of the two organizations in question themselves. Various Catholic movements, which in postwar France have combined an impeccable record on the Communist issue with a progressive and militantly liberal viewpoint, are not included, on the theory that their church identification creates for them a special and somewhat unique position in French social politics. The vigor of anticlericalism is strong indeed, and it may be argued that the popularity of the Catholic Union (CFTC), for example, is in the long run limited by its attachment, no matter how remote, to official Catholicism.

If the reader is uneasy about the historical approach employed in the first three chapters, he should remember that one of the failings here under scrutiny is the tendency to live in the shelter of doctrinal frameworks from out of the past. As many writers have pointed out, all Frenchmen live with a sense of history which makes their relationship to their past highly significant. Accordingly, we shall examine the backgrounds of French socialism, syndicalism (which gave birth to the labor movement) and the crucial period of the Popular Front before we analyze the performance and character of the non-Communist left since World War II.

chapter one

The Political and Social Heritage of the Non-Communist Left

The most striking feature of the non-Communist left in present-day France is that it is still marked by its ambivalent development. Both the Socialist Party and the CGTFO have common roots with the Communist Party and its labor union, the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*). The French workers' party and labor movement were, before World War I, unified bodies of diverse components. The Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, however, forced an ideological showdown which almost immediately precipitated a split in both organizations. The Communists captured a major share of the apparatus and membership of the prewar party, forcing out Léon Blum and a small moderate rump which maintained only the old prewar name (SFIO, *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*) and statement of principles. Choosing a separate existence in reaction to Communist philosophy and attempts to monopolize leadership of the left, the Socialists have slowly reshaped their original character, in part to emphasize their distinctiveness from their Communist rivals.*

The CGTFO (*Confédération Générale du Travail Force Ouvrière*), on the other hand, is a quite recent addition to French union politics, born out of disgust with Communist direction of the CGT's bloody anti-Marshall Plan strikes in the winter of 1947-48. Although CGTFO is a new union, it is actually only the reestablishment of a separate, non-Communist strand of labor activity which also appeared as a distinct element when the Moscow International began flexing its muscles in Europe after the Russian Revolution. Labor unity under the banner of the CGT, which had been the only significant labor organization since 1892, was broken in 1921. But this time it was the non-Communists who had the majority and who maintained the original organization, while the Communists set up a minority labor Central called the CGTU (*Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*). This split in the labor movement lasted up to the Popular Front period of the mid-thirties when the Communists were readmitted

* For insights into the complicated social structure of postwar France, see EDGAR S. FURNISS, JR.; *France: Keystone of Western Defense* (Doubleday Short Studies in Political Science, 1954), especially Chapter V.

to the CGT. The two groups divided again over the Nazi-Soviet Pact, only to merge once more during the Résistance, maintaining an uneasy unity until the final break in 1947-48. This split gave birth to CGTFO, a quite weak body compared to the now Communist-dominated CGT.

The Ideological Heritage

We must now examine at top speed the historical and ideological heritage of these two movements. The reader should be warned that this will be partially a psychological history. It is in the nature of the French character to use ideas as convenient reference points for the satisfying indulgence of "self-categorization." This does not mean that all Frenchmen are philosophers, or even that they fully understand specific ideologies or systems of thought, but rather that they have a respect for the compelling force of ideas and ideologies as factors of motivation in daily life. Attention to theoretical postulates and the interpretation of doctrine accordingly play roles of importance in French political and social life—importance that may appear disproportionate to objective political practice and achievement.

The Impact of Past Political Heroes

Since the sympathy of French workers is often deeper for the protagonists of long past social conflicts than for the political leaders of the moment, every left-wing social or political movement must establish its position in relation to certain fixed benchmarks in the topography of revolutionary history. Thus the Socialists still commemorate annually the dead of the Commune uprising of 1871, even though few of them would be found on the same side of the barricades under similar conditions today. The Communists, whose doctrinal intransigence is well known, still keep the legendary name of Jean Jaurès, the humanitarian Socialist of pre-World War I days, on the masthead of their party organ *L'Humanité*, which he founded. The faithful of the CGTFO chant the "Internationale," the official anthem of the Communist world, as lustily as their Stalinist rivals, because this ceremony had a special meaning for all unionists before schism was forced on the left, and abandoning it now would suggest a radical departure from the dogma of the past.

The Impact of Pure Revolutionary Ideals

The pursuit of revolutionary purity by all elements of the French left—except perhaps the new Catholic movements—has very deep roots in French social history. Most importantly, these working-class movements were bred in a country whose people had already declared themselves for or against the revolutionary tradition. There existed, in other words, a pro-revolutionary consciousness among large numbers of people which did not have to be created out of whole cloth by militant crusaders. Of course,

the revolutionary sentiment here in question did not always imply the existence of an active state of explosive anticipation. It was more often a disposition to accept the formulas and symbols of revolution and protest as a normal social alternative to politics by other means. It was not until the success of the Soviet revolt in Russia that questions as to the nature and purposes of proposed revolutions began to be seriously posed by any significant numbers of people on the left. From 1789 through 1848 and from 1871 to 1917, not only the goals but also the prophets of revolution underwent considerable change. The revolutionary following, however, remained a fixed element of the social equation until doubts, which had already existed for some time, found articulation in the schisms of the early 1920s.

If French history provided the revolutionary social matrix in which these left-wing movements were nurtured, it also furnished doctrines and doctrinalists for their inspiration and guidance. It is interesting to note that it was not until a foreign philosophy—Marxism-Leninism—interpreted by non-Frenchmen, threatened to supplant much of the original French dogma which had evolved during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to undermine the autonomy of French leadership, that unpatchable fissures began opening on the left. Syndicalism, a significant basing point for much of Mediterranean labor politics, was in fact a French creation, and socialism the world over may be said to owe as much to French theorists as to Marx.

Philosophers of the Left

Babeuf

Socialism naturally predated syndicalism: it was born of the radical flux brewed during the Revolution of '89. Although the principal contribution of the Revolution was the solid founding of republicanism and revolutionary Jacobinism, one obscure extremist, Gracchus Babeuf (François Emile Babeuf), died in an effort to add another strand, that of economic collectivism. It may, of course, be argued that this innovation would have been impossible without the equalitarian principles which had evolved during the Revolution—although until Babeuf and his band of plotters (self-titled the "Conspiracy of Equals") burst into the confusion of the later days of the Terror, equality had meant almost exclusively equality before the law and in the enjoyment of political rights.

Babeuf postulated a form of democratic communism within an essentially Utopian society, originated by a violent and sudden overthrow of the governing authorities. "The Conspirator" naively foresaw that once the economic forces which operated towards social inequality had been destroyed, his new political and economic arrangements could be maintained by the evolutionary and voluntary methods of republican socialism. Babeuf considered that the revolution he proposed would result in greater indi-

vidual liberty by freeing poor men from the oppression of the privileged orders of society. His preoccupation with this freedom marked him as a forerunner of the anarchist thread in French socialism, which was later to motivate most of labor politics. David Thomson has observed of this remarkable man's impact on future generations of the discontented:

Perhaps the main importance of the legend of Babeuf is that it has helped to strengthen the awareness of Frenchmen that democracy is something to be defended and fought for—if need be behind the barricades. . . . In France it [democracy] is a burning sense of liberty and equality perpetually menaced by forces of reaction or subversion, the working of a “general will” which authority will ever frustrate if given the opportunity.¹

Most of the ingredients of latter-day socialist thinking are identifiable in Babeuf's thought. Collectivism, revolutionism, communism, even individual dignity, are combined crudely in the early gropings of this unhappy apostle of revolt. That they are not consistently integrated is not surprising. It is more significant to note that Babeuf was concerned primarily with the negative concept of protest, with analyses of what ailed society, with calling for the defense of principles which have never been completely put in practice, rather than with the elaboration of a positive system of political philosophy. Dogmatic and ruthlessly convinced of the necessity for violent action, “the Conspirator” reached the greatest peak of effectiveness when pleading for Christian concepts of equality. This element of his faith was carefully suppressed and kept away from the scrutiny of historians and contemporaries until the 1880s by public authorities, who held the bulk of Babeuf's trial record in secret files, preferring to publicize only evidence of his revolutionary zeal. His faith, however, did not die with him. Much of it provided an eloquent starting point for Socialists and Syndicalists of later epochs.

The Associationists

In so far as their doctrines aided the development of an economic and sociological theory of socialism, the associationists St. Simon and Fourier, who followed Babeuf, contributed modestly to the elaboration of a socialist political theory for the masses. Both writers, without fully realizing the significance of what they did, insisted on the necessity of providing man with a new social environment. Human advances would not be assured, they felt, unless a complete break with the traditional arrangements of society was achieved.

The emphasis on authoritarianism found in the writings of St. Simon suggests clearly why he could not attract a wide and sympathetic following. The French masses could hardly be expected to welcome the prospect of a disciplined ordering of their proposed new way of life. Where St. Simon would have recast existing economic structures by means of complete over-

haul of property relationships, Fourier would have withdrawn the down-trodden and the exploited from existing reality and created a new artificial society. Unlike Cabet who followed him, however, Fourier never translated this uprooting into terms acceptable to large numbers of the disinherited. Basically, one can accept the Marxist critique of this Utopian solution.² It included, in the Marxist view, a not inadequate analysis of the inequities deriving from a bourgeois economy, but avoided the problem by refusing to tackle the inconsistencies and injustices head-on. No valid economic theory, the Marxists argued, supported the associationists' call to the masses. Hence they did not deserve their confidence. Apparently only those who would flee to the new Utopia would be spared the inevitable consequences of class antagonism. Most Frenchmen seemed to feel that what Fourier had to offer would not even justify flight. It cannot be denied either of these men, however, that their notions on the economic process did increase the literate understanding of this mechanism and add to the intellectual opinion of organized discontent.

Blanc

Louis Blanc, in many minds the personal symbol of the spirit of 1848, may be said to have been the first of the pre-Marxist modern socialists. In fact he was more statist than socialist, and his philosophy, deriving mainly from the "fraternal" spirit of the Revolution of '89, was in no sense a complete system. In his conception the State would provide security for all men, who, having thus been convinced of the folly of their antagonisms, would live in harmony with one another. His schemes for national workshops to provide minimum employment for the Parisian proletariat which supported the short-lived Republic of 1848 were heralded as the first fruits of an economic revolution, but were not much removed in fact from the crude suggestions of admittedly Utopian thinkers, albeit draped momentarily by an accident of history in the official wraps of the State.

Blanc became the first French Socialist to put any of his ideas to an actual test within the framework of public policy. Although the test failed, the concept of the right to work, which he perfected, became firmly lodged in Socialist consciousness and vocabulary. Even more significant was the personal bridge built by Blanc to the workers themselves. His form of socialism, incomplete, limited, reformist though it was, became a reality, if only briefly, for tens of thousands of desperate workers who had never been touched by the more esoteric schemes of Utopian blueprinters. The violent revolutionary spirit of Babeuf was momentarily out of style, tempered by decades of bourgeois monarchy and isolated associationism. It was hoped that sense and reason would now triumph over narrow selfish interest in order to upset the prevailing social and economic order. Blanc's most memorable contribution was to reinforce the thesis, born in 1789, that such a movement could come from below. To the workers, who were to slip into

a period of almost total preoccupation with cooperativism under the Second Empire, this was a heritage of untold value and a historic moment of high consequence. It was, of course, to become part of the experiential conviction which twenty-odd years later would also stiffen the backbones of the Communards.

By mid-century, even though socialism (except for the more empirical brand of Blanc) was still largely the preserve of a few intellectuals, a subtle change was being felt. The individualism which had evolved from revolutionary republicanism had early been seized by Babeuf and turned to the purposes of revolution. The new mood was reflected in his fervent hopes for the realization of true humanitarianism under communism. Babeuf had planned his abortive conspiracy to restore the true meaning of the Rights of Man. The Babouvists who followed him, however, were not always so successful in keeping their goals clearly defined. They became ensnared in one of the great Socialist contradictions, that is, being so intent on the fruition of plans as to lose sight of humanistic and individualistic ideals. The Rights of Man were becoming less tangible and more of a *mystique* as a complicated technological society began foisting its growing pains onto large numbers of the public. The concentration on reshaping the economy as a means of producing a favorable climate for the realization of individual rights and human dignity induced most thinkers to fall into the trap of devising authoritarian systems for the achievement of economic revolution.

Proudhon and Blanqui

Pierre Joseph Proudhon, whose writings colored the whole mid-nineteenth-century period, symbolized a partial return to specifically French concepts of socialism and social organization, but his pen was ever confused and sometimes contradictory. His impact, accordingly, was never as powerful as it might have been: he could and did mean all things to all men. He insisted on a concept of liberty so all-embracing that he decried all forms of authority as encumbrances on individualism, and singled out for special contempt the Jacobin Republic. The ideal society to Proudhon was an anarchic one in which equality would furnish justice undisturbed by controls. It is significant that both Marx and Engels recognized the uninhibited nature of Proudhon's mind during their early preparations of the Communist Manifesto. When looking for allies in France they turned to him as the most potent source of revolutionary sentiment. Proudhon's reply to this overture contained a warning that the revolutionists should not repeat Luther's tragic error and create new and inflexible dogmas:

Because we stand in the van of a new movement let us not make ourselves the protagonists of a new intolerance, let us not act like the apostles of a new religion, even if it be a religion of logic, a religion of reason.³

Such views earned for Proudhon both the bitter denunciation of Marx and a claim to the title of founder of French anarchism. Actually the individualistic cast of Proudhon's thought so restricted the mutualistic concepts on which his future society was to build that his theories could have been applied only to small groups of craftsmen, not large masses of industrial workers. Proudhon's special service in the development of French Socialist theory and labor politics was to lessen the full impact of Marxism. As a contemporary influence he diverted many Frenchmen from the path of true orthodoxy to less disciplined faiths.

From the nineteenth-century halfway mark until at least the First World War, the social thinking of the left was to be in part *sui generis* and in part purely Marxist. This mixed evolution of socialism was most strikingly symbolized by the participants in the grim and memorable experience in 1871 of the Commune. Marx tried to capture the movement for his own, but no one took this maneuver as seriously as he did. On the other hand, the one revolutionist whose leadership was not seriously threatened, Auguste Blanqui, had adopted much from the tactical writings of Marx. In appealing to the Parisian populace, however, Blanqui was careful to emphasize the Jacobin elements of protest and revolt, for after all, the mass of those that could be counted on to serve at the barricades was fundamentally Jacobin and Republican.

According to one writer, "Blanquism was more a temperament than a political doctrine."⁴ It was exactly the temperament which fitted the cruel demands of the Commune—violent, disciplined, and courageous. The responsibilities of revolutionary defense created an atmosphere, however, especially in the last days of the Commune, which weakened in Paris the popularity of broader and more individualistic principles of Proudhonism. Paradoxically enough, the frustration suffered by the workers in final defeat may have paved the way for a warm reception of those who later assumed Proudhon's mantle—the Anarchists. The Anarchists' contempt of political forms and their enthusiasm for a weak mutualistic federalism were feelings more suited to the needs of tired and embittered old Communards in the eighties and nineties than to the often frenetical Parisians of 1871. From Proudhon the Anarchists appropriated an antiparliamentary attitude and a high degree of libertarianism, from Blanqui their blood-thirsty watchwords, and from Marx the explanation of their exploitation.

Marx and the Syndicalists

It is at this point in the maturation of French radical thought that syndicalism, the earliest motivating theory of the modern labor movement, was born. Appropriately, then, we must pause and analyze the theoretical atmosphere of the French left in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The rigid orthodoxy of Marxism was putting to the test less extreme forms of Socialist faith by questioning the logic of their philosophies.

Marxism offered a package of economic analysis, interpretation of history, tactical indoctrination, and the vision of a new world—a construction of ideas which pure Marxists never considered susceptible of abstraction. If one postulate of the theory was accepted, then the next proposition would have to be, and the next would logically fall into place, and so on.

At first blush it might be supposed that Frenchmen, long trained in the Cartesian school of thought, would enthusiastically flock to such a creed. Basic to an understanding of the upheaval wrought by the introduction of Marxism, however, is the realization that it was in competition with already existent thought patterns and belief systems—often admittedly rudimentary—concerning such matters as revolution, the distribution of economic satisfactions, labor exploitation, and the like. More significantly, large numbers of those who concerned themselves about such matters at all were emotionally involved in the experience of social action, that is, experiences such as 1789, 1848, 1871—more meaningful and vivid than any set of ideas brought forth by its author in hopes of sparking another (and final) burst of revolutionary activity. Workers who had tasted the ugliness and exhilaration of even a few minutes of triumph on the barricades (or whose fathers had) were more deeply absorbed in that incident and the ideals which they believed it symbolized than they ever could be in the somewhat elusive dialectics of Marx.

Most of the revolutionary tradition up to this point was firmly anchored to the twin pillars of republicanism and the Rights of Man. The collective ideal was regarded as an additional sophistication which would make more effective the approach to humanitarian equalitarianism. Revolutionists had fought and sacrificed themselves for the acquisition of democratic liberties. Now Marxism would require them to seek a social ideal in a revolution that would destroy a democracy. Paradoxically, the Marxists hoped to use the French revolutionary tradition to advantage in appealing for support.

Jaurès

The idea of the collective society was, however, gaining some ground on the old ideals of equality and humanitarian brotherhood. A dictatorship of the proletariat was the instrument by which the Republic would be erased in favor of the new social organization. By its very name, “the dictatorship” denied the old revolutionary values. The impact of this conflict in ideas and ideals was twofold. On the one hand many French Socialists drifted quite unconsciously away from the implications of the new doctrines and began to seek collectivity through the democratic Republic by making it more democratic rather than by destroying it. The greatest name in this reaction was, of course, Jean Léon Jaurès, still today the inspiration of a goodly segment of the non-Communist left.

A quite contrary development saw many Frenchmen revolt against what appeared to them the purely intellectual differences of Socialist thinkers.

More emotionally than rationally moved by the history of French revolutionism, they searched for principles which would permit the most complete sweeping away of all standing institutions and traditions. They found them in the libertarianism of Proudhon, as noted above, and in the exhortations of Babeuf and Blanqui. Anarchists first, they soon turned their attentions to the emerging efforts of labor to organize, and contributed to the elaboration of that very French set of ideas which ultimately came to be called *syndicalism*.

Our story then must divide at this point. We will be concerned first with the evolution of political socialism in its Marxist period (which on some definitions may be thought of as continuing to the present), and in Chapter Two with syndicalism and organized labor. If such a sharp separation seems illogical, it must be recalled that the syndicalists themselves created the differentiation by insisting on a nonpolitical labor movement, that is, one not tied to any political leader or group of leaders, existing for its own sake, and equipped with a unique set of social and economic goals. On the other hand, the labor movement was (and still is) a part of socialism in the sense that it was a definite approach to the collective society, and more fundamentally, perhaps, because its membership often coincided with the rank-and-file following of political socialism. The distinctions between political socialism and the labor movement insisted on by French working-class leadership all during the twentieth century have contributed, as will be demonstrated in later chapters, to the weaknesses of both.

Evolution of Modern Socialism

To return to the development of modern French socialism: it has already been noted that Marxism was accepted in varying degrees depending on a number of largely "French" factors. Actually there existed four schools of socialism in the 1880s and 1890s (five if revolutionary syndicalism is added). They were the Guesdists, Broussists, Allemanists, and Independents, only the first of which could be labeled purely orthodox in its Marxism. Schools they were rather than parties, because until the turn of the century parliamentary representation tended to produce individual deputies rather than the disciplined spokesmen of unified organizations. The Socialists in the Chamber were the most prominent in France (except, of course, those engaged in syndicalist activity), but their followings were not usually nation-wide nor even members of a specific group professing a particular creed of its own. The emergence of a fairly homogeneous and compact organization had two causes. The first was the necessity that Frenchmen who called themselves Socialists faced of representing their movements in the annual meetings of the Second International. The second cause was the unifying effort of Jean Jaurès, the leading member of the Independents, in the task of molding a coherent national, parliamentary party.

On these two stages—the Congresses of the International and the floor of the Chamber of Deputies—the Socialist Party, which was finally created out of the various splinter factions in 1905, grew up differently. When speaking the language which the atmosphere of the International demanded, emphasis was always on the cataclysmic aspects of Marxism. It was there that the doctrines of antimilitarism and antipatriotism were given their fullest oratorical airing. In the Chamber, however, the Party displayed considerable unity behind the warm humanitarian leadership of Jaurès. Socialism was regarded there as the highest form of democracy—a democracy already established, which the Party was striving to perfect and strengthen, rather than dispose of once and for all in order to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat. On both scenes, however, Jaurès served as the synthesizer of the extreme wings of French Socialist thought, faithful to his role as the unifier of the Party. Some have claimed that he weakened the Party by failing to capture it for his personal brand of revisionist socialism in the period just prior to World War I when his political prestige ran very high. A more apt criticism might be that in his efforts to reconcile the extreme antipatriots, who were for long a minority (although a highly vocal and dedicated one), with the majority of his Party who thought less of revolution and more of republican reform for the working class, he unwittingly failed by concealing the really fundamental differences which existed between these two main currents of political disposition.

The Impact of the Russian Revolution (1917)

These differences, as has been noted previously, were ultimately brought to the point of no return by the brutal international effects of the war, and its most terrifying by-product, the Russian Bolshevik Revolution. But the cracks which produced the postwar fissure between French socialism and socialism Russian style had been opening long before this. Marxist influence had engineered the adoption in 1905 of a statement of principles for the Party which began:

The Socialist Party is a class party, which has for its goal the socialization of the means of production and of exchange—that is to say, to transform the capitalist society into a collectivist or communist society; and for methods, the economic or political organization of the proletariat. . . . The Socialist Party, while working for the realization of immediate reforms demanded by the working class, is not a reform party, but a party of the class struggle and of revolution.⁵

Those who objected to the abandonment of democratic formulas which had been in years past the trademark of much of French socialism were persuaded to drop their objections by the contention that adoption of the text would at least bring unity between different fractions and lay the groundwork for a mass socialist movement. Needless to say, the more

doctrinaire of the Socialists used the statement of principles as a point of reference for the utterance of the most unbridled revolutionary sentiments. The hesitant could always be reminded that, after all, this was "a party of the class struggle and of revolution."

Jaurès, troubled by the intransigence of some of his comrades, nevertheless continued to champion extremist resolutions at the Congresses of the International, including an affirmation of the effectiveness of a general strike in the event of war. It was perhaps in the conviction that the establishment of international peace could be realized only through trans-European Socialist unity that Jaurès allowed himself to stand with men whose ideas were in most instances far removed from his own. The sad history of the furious efforts by Jaurès and others to assure the success of a strike in Germany and France at the moment of mobilization—or failing that to provoke delaying diplomatic *démarches*—is well known and widely documented. Jaurès died of an assassin's bullet on July 31, 1914, aware that nationalism had triumphed over international socialism in both countries.

The death of the "Great Tribune" robbed French socialism of its most effective leader and left the movement in a state of political and doctrinal confusion from which it has never recovered. An inspiring humanist who understood the burning democratic faith which motivated the tides of revolution and protest in the French past, he had used the most uncompromising and intolerant of Marxist forces to unify the movement and in an attempt to win European peace. His death ended the possibility that the latter elements could be integrated into a more broadly based movement of flexible tolerance with a basic comprehension of individual dignity. A portion of the Party sanctioned the entrance of Socialists into the Union Sacrée, although in the previous decade and a half the participation of Briand and Millerand in "bourgeois governments" had been cause for their excommunication. Another smaller group, drawn largely from those who had worked for an active program of antipatriotism, busied itself with efforts to bring an end to the war. The action of Guesde and Sembat in joining the war cabinet swelled the ranks of the antipatriots, who were alarmed by this unfeeling lack of class consciousness. In time—and the pace quickened when the Russian Revolution broke—the minority Socialists became the majority in a growing disgust with the handling of the war. This story cannot be fully told here, but it should be noted that for a generation of Frenchmen who had been reared in the belief that revolution was a good thing, who were tired and disillusioned by a conflict many felt could have been avoided by a deeper dedication to Socialist principles, who were suspicious of the new respectability of their leaders, the revolution of the Soviets was an inspiringly optimistic symbol of dreams fulfilled. The true nature of the Soviet regime was eventually to provoke new doubts and hesitations, but at first it gave the revolutionary Marxists a clear field, and they used their opportunity to great advantage.

In December of 1920 the enthusiasts of the new Communist International—by then a majority of the Socialist Party—split off and took most of the Party's institutional baggage with them, adopting the name, at the insistence of Moscow, *Parti Communiste Français*. Léon Blum, the lieutenant of Jaurès, was left with a smaller number of Socialists, the Party's original name, and its statement of principles.

The Socialists and Schism on the Left

Who were these men who chose not to follow the primrose path at Moscow's bidding? They were the moderates, the reformists, and the old followers of Jauresian humanitarianism. Some were faithful to the now quite elderly Jules Guesde, orthodox in their Marxism, but protectively suspicious of any hint of outside direction or control of the movement they had labored so hard to create. Some were fire-eating revolutionists touched by Blanquism or anarchism, to whom Blum was anathema but Moscow was worse. The Communists had won whole sections of the Party from all over France, but in the first ten years of life they were to lose a high percentage of the rank and file—not necessarily to the Socialists (although many did drift back to what was called "the old home")—but to cynical political neutrality, or at best to only occasional loyalty.

The Socialists emerged from the experience of schism with an almost baseless philosophy. The one common element was a watery form of frightened Marxism. Differentiation between themselves and the Communists was to force them to accept some minimal democratic principles. Obviously they had not all been convinced democrats in the past, but now because their chief reason for parting company with their more violent comrades was their objection to the sternly authoritarian cast of the Soviet dictatorship of the proletariat (although at the same time they wished to remain faithful to Marxist doctrines), they began to emphasize the virtue of political liberty as a distinguishing feature between their form of Marxism and that of the French Communist Party.

In reputation and self-assertion many still thought themselves to be revolutionaries, but this was easy in a country where historical revolutions had more popular support than present-day revolutions. In the testy period of reaction against the excesses of anarchism before the war, and in the inescapable patriotic atmosphere of the first years of war, revolt had lost some of its broad appeal. Anti-Marxists and reactionaries had used the Anarchist bogey to suggest that the twentieth-century revolutionary was not really an old-style Jacobin, but the foreign carrier of a new infection who cared nothing for France or Frenchmen. It would be impossible to argue that the revolutionary ideal was discredited on the French left by the acts of the Anarchists or by anything else, but rather it may be suggested that it was becoming more convenient to use the revolution as a symbol of faith or militancy, rather than to consider it an immediately probable eventuality.

By maintaining the revolution as symbol, the Party leadership felt it was fulfilling a political and psychological imperative demanded by the French worker. Though himself uneasy about revolution and its consequences, the worker yet needed, it was thought, to be convinced he was part of a revolutionary movement; the Party kindly left it implicitly understood that he would never be called on to cut his bourgeois neighbor's throat.

This was the atmosphere in which the Socialists entered the interwar period; they were confused by the implications of division with the Communists, hardly yet aware of the inconsistencies between their publicly announced personality and their personal attitudes, and institutionally short of funds and following. By 1936 their fortunes had risen considerably, but the first two difficulties have not yet been solved today. The interwar years saw the Socialists become a political party not much different from all the others in France. Socialism as a motivating and stimulating ideology was to lose many of the qualities which had made it in years past a fascinating *mystique* for Frenchmen of the left.

Conclusion

The mixture of social philosophies that had arisen in response to particular French aspirations and traditions never fully digested the harsh physc of Marxism. Certainly all Socialists accepted much of what Marxism had to offer. Many, of course, swallowed all of its implications, including the new ones surfaced by the Bolshevik Revolution. Nevertheless, the basic imbalance between essentially humanitarian and idealist doctrines of Babeuf, Blanc, Jaurès, *et al.* and the impersonal scriptures of Marx and Lenin were beginning to cause ideological dislocations of a serious nature. The most immediate consequence of this disequilibrium was the formal political differentiation between Communists and Socialists. More important to this study, however, were the beginnings of doctrinal confusion precipitated within the non-Communist left. The agonies of this confusion will be traced in future chapters, but first the somewhat different background of the French labor movement per se must be considered.

chapter two

The French Labor Movement and the Syndicalist Heritage

A unique characteristic of the French left is that it has developed a labor movement separate from political institutions, equipped with its own set of philosophical beliefs. The division between labor organization and political organization has been a source of both strength and weakness for the left. It has also necessitated the elaboration of a distinctive theory on how socialism may be achieved without reliance on political movements. This theory is *syndicalism*, which still lingers as a significant force to be reckoned with in union circles.

The Role of Syndicalist Theory

If syndicalism is defined as a set of principles governing the actions and suggesting the goals of a working-class movement, it must be remembered that as a creed it was definitely secondary to the movement in the organic sense. French unionism, in other words, developed pragmatically, inventing or adopting propositions which would describe events and rationalize workers' responses to them. Certain Marxian precepts, especially the analysis of capitalist exploitation, were generally accepted by the workers, but the tactical demands and the political implications of Marxism were points of difference. Within the ranks of labor generally there was wide opportunity to differ on such fundamentals. In fact it was precisely to obtain the freedom for workers of various political faiths to disagree, and yet remain united on a few important issues, that there was developed a nonpolitical movement. Subtle philosophical differences could, it was hoped, thus be overcome for the sake of unifying a strong body of workers which might then effectively deploy in the traditional maneuvers of industrial activity—the strike, the protest, the boycott, etc.

Diversity of Inspiration

Workers' organizations sprang up fast in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Inevitably spokesmen appeared who sought to provide them with a faith of their own. Some were militants who had supplied the original inspiration for trade-union activity; others were intellectuals or

politicians hoping to impose a share of their own beliefs on the new movements. The contributions of these two groups, however, were never in balance. Grassroots labor leaders emphasized tactics and organizational techniques; outsiders tried to convince the workers to accept a systematic philosophy embracing not only Marxian economic theory but a coherent explanation of the position of their movement in society and its relation to a revolutionary ideal. By the turn of the century the propositions of syndicalism, a somewhat imperfect blend of almost incompatible elements, had been rooted in the labor movement both locally and nationally. Most of its postulates were accepted with varying degrees of enthusiasm by most workers.

Apolitization and the General Strike

The basic dogma of syndicalism is *apolitization*, the complete separation of labor-movement activity and politics or political connections. This primary element was early combined with an inflammatory dedication to bitter class consciousness—and it was over this concept that the first splits were to develop somewhat later within the body of syndicalism. Both moderates and extremists were happy to accept the separation of economic from political activity, but they differed finally over the depth of class hatred which their philosophy demanded. To apolitization and class consciousness must be added the goal of all syndicalist organizations, that is, the reshaping of society in such a way that the only valid institutions are working-class units. Apart from this rather vaguely stated end there is little preoccupation with futuristic planning in the writings of Syndicalists. A modern writer says of the early syndical revolutionists: to them “the movement is everything, the final goal is nothing.”¹ Thus the workers expressed their distrust of the realm of politics and of the elaborate philosophies which socialist intellectuals insisted should guide their march to the new society.

This concern with militancy rather than goals also explains why the tactic of the general strike loomed so large in syndicalist writings. Theoretically this was to be a spontaneous workers' upheaval which would destroy existing society and replace it with a workers' community. There would be no organizational preparation for “the General Strike”; in fact it was so vaguely described that it served more as a symbol of future liberation than as a specific operational technique. If the militants could be persuaded that The Strike might develop any time from any strike movement, they might be expected to keep their militancy and activism at a high pitch without expending their energy on doctrinal squabbles.

The Role of Politics and Politicians

Two complications in the development of the French labor movement must be noted, however. First, the earliest organizational frameworks for

national labor unionism were designed with the aid of active political figures. Many of these men had two personalities—one as labor leader and another as believer in a particular political creed. Some used the new institutions of trade unionism as a protest against the divisions into which the Socialists had fallen; others used it as a reaction against socialism *per se*. This latter group was the Anarchists, who were in full cry against the more rigid qualities of socialism. All of the original organizers of the labor movement left their stamp on syndicalism, even before it became a jealously independent body of workers equipped with an ideology of its own. The second difficulty in the maturing process of syndicalism came after the turn of the century when the labor movement began to grow into modern proportions. Disputes over leadership soon arose—and interestingly enough, they took political form. Only a few workers were in the long run able to submerge their political personalities entirely. These problems must be considered in some detail in this chapter, but for the sake of clarity categorizations will be suggested here dividing the periods of union growth into different phases of ideological emphasis.

First is the period of organizational growth from the 1880s to the 1890s. Labor organizations developed fast under the sponsorship of two wings of Socialism—the Guesdists and the Broussists (or Possibilists). In the nineties, at the insistence of anarchists, the workers' organs split away from Socialist tutelage and went into a phase which has been called *anarcho-syndicalism*. But the excesses of the anarchist spirit led to a reaction against this leadership in the early years of the twentieth century, which saw the flowering of a purely syndicalist faith. It was the decade and a half between the turn of the century and World War I that has been dubbed the Golden Age of Revolutionary Syndicalism, a title suggesting the vigorously independent position maintained in these years. Finally, there is the modern period of the labor movement's history which began with World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution and separated labor into Communist and so-called Reformist wings.

This confusion and vacillation between political and nonpolitical leadership can be better understood if it is remembered that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a great flux of theories. There were ideas aplenty on the Continent to be peddled to any group which would advance them. Furthermore discipline, especially of the doctrinal variety, was poor even within the Socialist bodies which had been organized as political units. Few leaders were prepared to force "a line" that must be swallowed by all their followers. Many depended on the simple expedient of appealing to the great French revolutionary tradition, or of invoking bitter and emotional memories of the Commune or the revolt of 1848. Louis Blanc was still highly regarded by the workers, and those who leaned towards anarchism had drunk deeply from the works of Proudhon. Pelloutier, an early Syndicalist organizer, was a devotee of Bakunin, the Russian

Anarchist. Active Blanquists, Allemanists, Guesdists, and Anarchists occupied positions of responsibility in the labor movement, but significantly enough, a good share were nonparty men. These were the ones groping for some universal postulates on which all workingmen could agree—or which would divide them least.

The Gradual Acceptance of Syndicalism

The development of the labor movement in its separate form may also be conveniently viewed in terms of its progress in accepting segments of syndicalist thought. First came the realization by the workers—often as sympathizers with political figures—that they were involved in a class struggle which probably could not be resolved without recourse to revolution. French employers, who still today seem the most irreconcilable prototypes of nineteenth-century capitalists, did nothing to dispel the notion that social change could come only at the cost of revolution. In the Chamber the politicians of the Third Republic labored mightily but produced very little in the way of social reform. Class consciousness was combined with the very practical urgings of labor leaders that the workers' strength could be most efficiently disposed if they were organized collectively to use economic weapons such as the strike. The resulting combinations of workers tempted political figures to use these blocs for the advancement of their own particular social philosophies.

The Anarchists then began trading on the workers' long-smoldering suspicion of outside leadership to convince them that all political relationships would eventually result in a compromise of labor's interests. There were sound historical precedents for the Anarchists to point to as evidence of how the blood of the working class had been spilled in outbursts from which only the "soft-handed bourgeoisie" had benefited. Two principal consequences resulted from this type of reasoning. The first was, of course, political disengagement, a major step in the development of syndicalist thought. The second was a misty conception of the future society as one organized around the workshop, which would take the place of all pre-existing institutional arrangements of the State. This was both a Proudhonian and an anarchist ideal. It had the advantage of suggesting to the workers that they and their most familiar social institutions would some day dominate the society. They would not after "The Revolution" be herded into a new pattern of living predesigned for them by intellectual blue-printers. The disadvantage of this line of thinking lay in its implication that all the traditional forms and elements of social order must be dissolved. This terrified different workers for different reasons. Not all men were willing to abandon the traditional and familiar church, family, parliament, justice, or what have you. In addition, the libertarian extreme, if logically accepted, meant that there could not be much dependence on the institutions of syndicalism themselves. This last anomaly never really squared

with the desires of patient labor leaders toiling unflaggingly for years to build a militant force from individualistic French workers, who resisted combination and its obligations stubbornly. Something of the difficulties these organizers faced has been expressed by the labor historian, Paul Louis:

The mentality of the unionists was naturally entirely impregnated with distrust [against the bourgeoisie and its alleged organ, the State] and in this distrust their thought was subject to variations. For a long time it was in revolt against strict discipline, and penetrated with individualism—and individualism is, or has been, a characteristic of the French mentality. . . . French workers excite themselves over ideas and individuals. . . . They are aroused quickly to enthusiasm for new institutions, but only to defection or indifference once these institutions are established.²

Individualism and "The Conscious Minority"

One final theoretic development was supplied by the Anarchists and their successors, the true revolutionary Syndicalists. The rejection of politics grew to mean the rejection of democracy and its principal techniques: majority rule, universal suffrage, and parliamentary representation. Instead of democracy the Syndicalists adopted the theory of what was called *the conscious minority*—not unlike the Bolshevik concept of a proletarian elite. The militant workers would form a dictatorial core, which would be able to withstand, through a self-discipline impossible for larger numbers, the blandishments of reformism and the seduction of political appeals. Criticizing Guesdism, the most substantial form of socialism then operating on the political stage, one Syndicalist intellectual wrote:

Guesdism is the demonstration of . . . the impossibility for socialism to be realized in the democratic field, and of the danger to the working class of becoming a party—democracy being the essence of the bourgeoisie; and the parties, such as they are, being the natural organs of bourgeois democracy.³

This was a view shared not only by the intellectuals but by many working-class leaders. It is obvious, however, that the "conscious minority" corollary added to the antidemocratic bias of syndicalism would furnish touchy unionists with ample opportunity for disgruntlement over dictation from above. One of the great paradoxes of French trade-union life was, and still is, the necessity for organizing a disciplined labor force of effective size from a rank and file rebelliously individualistic and basically distrustful of *all* leadership.

The effect of this theory on workers was clear. For some it meant a defense against the politics of socialism. They argued that since the most pristine form of class consciousness was to be found in *syndicats* (as the workers' local unions were called) because there was a common occupa-

tional bond among the workers, socialism could be attained only through syndicalism. Less intransigent workers were willing to keep their political personalities submerged for the sake of working-class unity but saw no necessity to turn on the Socialists and belabor them because they were not all syndicalists. They continued to vote Socialist and quietly applauded the efforts of Jaurès and his companions in the Chamber to satisfy their short-range demands. Perhaps because "The Revolution," which all elements agreed on as the ultimate goal, was obviously still quite distant these two groups never divided sharply in the prewar years. They differed over strategical concepts but not much over the day-to-day tactical questions they were called on to decide.

The Congress of Amiens (1906)

Among those who would abandon all but syndicalist organizations in the march to a revolutionary new order a curious development began taking place after the famous Congress of Amiens in 1906. It was at this meeting of labor leaders that the hitherto separate labor bodies, the Federation of Labor Centers (*Fédération des Bourses du Travail*), consisting of all workers of many trades in a given area, and the National Federation of Unions (*Fédération Nationale des Syndicats*)—*syndicats* were unions of workers of one skill, such as the union of textile workers, the union of hatters, etc.—were consolidated into one central organization, the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*). The new Central was so designed that it maintained both local unions of all workers and national federations of specific trades. It was only natural that the national federations should quickly gain the commanding points of power in the whole labor movement because they controlled particular trades organized throughout France.

The speed-up in technical specialization that accompanied the industrial expansion of this period meant that workers' interests became more and more particularistic. Steel workers engaged in the manufacture of machine tools for which there was strong British competition found, for example, that they did not share the dockworkers' enthusiasm for a low tariff. Matters of international policy were especially susceptible to difference of opinion according to the way it bore on specific occupations. Accordingly, the federations, who could each marshal a whole occupational group behind a specific demand, grew stronger as the locally organized unions of many different skills found it increasingly difficult to secure agreement on common goals for action. The natural consequence of this growing strength was a preoccupation with selfish (or at best professional) concerns. As soon as workers began to think of themselves primarily as railroad men or construction laborers instead of as syndicalist troops in the preparation of "The Revolution" with other workers, an inevitable psychological reaction began operating. The first and most important indication of this was the beginning of bureaucratization in the federations. Organizational protec-

tion and professional self-defense developed for the first time in the history of the French labor movement. Characteristically, however, this conservative phenomenon was far more manifest in the realm of leadership in these unions than among the rank and file. It was only natural that this influence would sooner or later touch the national leadership of the CGT. To the extent that the spirit of bureaucratization caused a deflation of revolutionary ardor and a preoccupation with union structure itself, French syndicalism began to take on the appearance of traditional trade unionism. Generally speaking, however, this did not become too noticeable a development until after World War I.

The Golden Age (1890–1914)

The Golden Age of Revolutionary Syndicalism deserves a few paragraphs of special attention. It was at this time that the French workers earned their reputation as champions of revolutionary antimilitarism. The really significant effect of syndicalist teachings had been to deemphasize the Jacobin-patriotic element of revolutionary consciousness and to substitute for the workers a special rationale of their own. This was the bitterly aloof class consciousness, even more intemperate and emphatic than that of the political Socialists. The workers were taught to distrust all but members of their own class—to separate themselves from all the works, past and present, of the nonworking classes. Patriotism to the Republic was an early casualty of this line of thinking. Clearly, however, this idea was embraced in different ways depending on the Syndicalists' own personal convictions. For many, antimilitarism was a logical outgrowth of pacifism—a sentiment that had been carefully nurtured by all brands of Socialists—and fitted well with the peasant background of the floats of unskilled and semiskilled workers pouring into new industry at the time from rural areas. The more doctrinaire—and these were usually the more vocal—synchronized an antimilitaristic creed with the concept of the General Strike. War between states was to be met by a strike which would immobilize the combatants and provide a springboard for social revolution by workers in the ensuing confusion. In 1908 the national congress of the CGT adopted a resolution endorsing the General Strike as a means of implementing antimilitarism. There are indications, however, that despite the success of left-wing leaders in forcing agreement on this inflammatory principle, other responsible officials of the CGT were not wholly satisfied with the attitude of their German counterparts in negotiations to fix an international policy for the General Strike. To the syndicalist officers who would have to give the signal for an international uprising in an atmosphere of flourishing nationalism, complete dependence on the reaction of both countries' labor movements would be essential. Without full confidence in the German workers the French leaders had reason to be uneasy about their organization's mandate to work for the revolutionary General Strike.

The Beginnings of Disunity among the Syndicalists

Eventually the syndicalist movement began to show signs of fissure, not over the doctrine of antimilitarism (although the popularity of this idea was never really tested at the grassroots) but in the rumbling conflict between revolutionaries and reformists. The latter faction had been growing increasingly concerned with the obduracy of the revolutionaries. Although they accepted the idea of the General Strike as a means of achieving workers' control in the society, they regretted the violent language and bloody threats of the leftists. Their interest was more centered in hopes for working out a system of collective bargaining than in organizing anti-patriotic rallies for the workers. As already noted, they were not unhappy about the tidbits of social reform occasionally tossed their way by the Chamber of Deputies. In the years immediately prior to World War I the views of both factions within syndicalism tended to polarize more and more. Meanwhile the Secretary General of the CGT, young Léon Jouhaux, who had been nominated for his post by anarcho-syndicalist elements, played a cautious game of siding publicly with the revolutionists while he personally reassessed the assumptions on which his own syndicalist faith had been based.

The coming of World War I wrote *finis* to the *mystique* which had been building around syndicalism. Revolutionary fervor, although it may have simmered menacingly at the moment of Jaurès' assassination, subsided quietly before the hot rush of nationalism which quickly enveloped France. The practical difficulties of persuading the German workers to join a protest against the war convinced thousands of syndicalists that the "spontaneity" of the General Strike would never be far-reaching enough to overcome practical organizational stumbling blocks. When Jouhaux himself joined the Union Sacrée as one of several "Commissars of the Nation," it was widely inferred that he had destroyed the last hope for maintaining the apolitical nature of syndicalism. Those who retained their faith were bitterly disillusioned and refused any longer to recognize his leadership. Schism within the movement became inevitable, but for a long while the break did not take the form of true syndicalism vs. Jouhaux heresy, but rather the simpler conflict between patriots and those who would end the war as quickly as possible through negotiation. It was the Reformists generally who sided with Jouhaux on the theory that German victory would mean the abolition of whatever social advances the French working class had achieved for itself. Less subtly, these workers undoubtedly were patriotic Frenchmen who accepted duty to the State under foreign attack as a matter of course.

The full story of war-created division on the labor front is a long and complicated one. In much oversimplified terms it is probably adequate to define the conflict as one between moderate Unionists faithful to Jouhaux,

syndicalists who disavowed their leader but were not persuaded by the extreme left wing who insisted on denouncing all attachments to France as evidence of bourgeois sentimentality, and the unbridled antipatriotic left. The Bolshevik Revolution widened the differences between the first and last two groups and in the postwar world finally produced a double labor movement, one Central under Communist leadership, the other under the guidance of the more temperate Jouhaux.

Conclusion

In concluding this summary view of early labor-movement growth and maturation, two final points remain to be made. First, the constant pressure, which the left extremists kept applying in the prewar and war years for deeper revolutionary dedication by the masses, for the demonstration of truly antipatriotic beliefs and actions, and for adoption of antidemocratic sentiments in violence of traditional egalitarianism and the Rights of Man, began inevitably to produce a reaction in their opponents. The moderates who had accepted the tenets of syndicalism only in terms of the tactical advantage of keeping the labor movement unified began to question seriously the content of these doctrines. Although they never explicitly repudiated the catechism of syndicalism, they undertook after the war to develop parallel lines of thought, based on the motto, "Revolutionary Democracy," with the emphasis on democracy.

The second proposition which emerges after a review of the birth and adolescence of syndicalism is one which was not fully clear by the end of World War I. It is the suggestion that labor unity bought at the cost of compromise over philosophic differences may be not only impractical but also dangerous to the health of society. This proposition will be reexamined throughout this study.

With mixed feelings, the CGT watched the Communists walk out and set up their own Central, the CGTU, late in 1921. Although unlike their Socialist counterparts they were in possession of all the valuable institutional baggage of the past, they were by the very nature of their situation involved in a new era. Division not only violated a sacred precept of syndicalism, but also set in motion a gnawing wistfulness to call back the dissidents into the fold, no matter what their philosophy.

Concurrently the non-Communist unionists were aware that differences between themselves and the Communists were not merely superficial. Unable to fully articulate these distinctions because of their determination to maintain "the old faith," CGT leaders ruminated while the character of their following slowly changed. Subsequent chapters will attempt to show why they were never fully capable of capitalizing on this evolution.

chapter three

Reformism and the Popular Front

If there was a common failing shared by the two major working-class movements which repudiated Communist leadership after World War I, it was their inability to elaborate acceptable new doctrines which would rationalize their new position. One, the CGT, could claim that it had not broken the dogma of working-class unity because it had been the Communist element which had departed into autonomy. The other, the SFIO, could not even maintain this thread of respectability, because it was composed of all those who had been put in a minority in the Socialist Party when it had adhered to the Moscow International. The minority had not submitted to discipline, but had set up on its own.

Postwar Confusion on the Left

Thus, for the first time in some years the French left was divided, and in such a situation the Communists had at least a doctrinal advantage. They could justly claim they represented the only vital revolutionary spirit—vital in the sense that it had been successful—and that no one could be more “left” than they. Those who did not accept their blueprint for revolution were “enemies of the liberation of the working class.” If they were to preserve any of their relations with the working class, the Socialists had to respond to this challenge by claiming for themselves the strictest purity of faith. At the same time, because they had chosen a separate identity from the Communists, their policies and programs had to reflect this distinctiveness. This dilemma set in motion the curious interwar metamorphosis of the Socialists. Posturing as revolutionists, they were in fact maturing their reformism as they accepted more and more of the democratic ethic.

The Party spokesmen who had made the decision to leave their more intransigent comrades over the question of allegiance to the Third International continued for some time to give the impression that although they welcomed the hot revolutionary spice of its manifesto, respected and envied its power, and gloried in its successes, they feared the realities behind this glittering façade.

The syndicalists also split over the issue of the Bolshevik Revolution, as we have seen. At no time had democratic theory or even crude con-

ceptions of human rights been very firmly implanted in the labor movement, whereas Jaurès had supplied these elements for the Socialist Party. So it was a revulsion against Bolshevik demands on the union movement which divided the syndicalists after the war, not the matter of democrats versus antidemocrats. In truth many labor people decided against the new Communist-controlled Central (CGTU), not because they feared its revolutionary character, but because politically oriented cells directed its rank-and-file operations. The greatest number of these latter, of course, were true-blue syndical revolutionaries, representing the purest form of French labor thought; although it must be added that some of these individuals, who originally opted for the CGTU, put up a valiant rear-guard action against their Communist leadership for a few years before withdrawing completely.

Changes in the Character of Syndicalism

In the interwar years French syndicalism rapidly changed its spots by attempting to become a mass movement. The concept of the conscious minority was in practice soon brushed aside by both the CGT and CGTU, although for most of its life the latter remained not much more than a fractionalist union. Hand in hand with the new emphasis on recruiting and the welcoming of workers of any type or occupational group into the ranks of unionism, there developed a strong preoccupation with economic planning in the postwar CGT. Cynics pointed out that this was an obvious consequence of the leadership of Jouhaux, who they claimed had been mesmerized by the fascinating experience of government service during the war. As early as 1918 he had proposed the creation of a National Economic Council to guide the government in its handling of economic policy, on which organized labor would have official representation. This was a far cry from the scornful antigovernmentalism of prewar syndicalism. Other demands made by Jouhaux included the development of a tight system of social security and an economic policy distinguished only by the fact that it was more *dirigiste* than that of the Socialists.

Two reasons are generally advanced for the new union approach undertaken by Jouhaux. The first, of course, was the necessity of providing an atmosphere of security for a postwar generation frightened by inflation and sickened with violence. If most of the fire-eaters were looking to the CGTU for inspiration, then the CGT felt it could appeal to the tired and the timid with security. The second purpose in adopting the new direction was to attract into syndicalism the huge numbers of civil servants,* who had hitherto been separately organized. Actually it was not until 1928 that

* Civil servants in France are an enormous slice of the working population. Because of the centralized nature of the State they include not only the usual government office workers, but railroad men, postal employees, teachers, public-utility workers, and people in many other categories.

the Federation of Civil Servants was drawn into the CGT—where it soon established a special position for itself, overshadowing all other elements in the Central. The reformist character of the non-Communist union was determined for all practical purposes at this juncture.

The addition of hundreds of thousands of civil servants to the ranks of the CGT (smaller elements joined the CGTU) spelled the end of any real return of broad-spread revolutionary syndicalism. The government workers brought with them precise ideas about their relationship to their employer—the democratic Republic. Many were proud of their jobs; as public servants they did not work in surly tolerance of the capitalist boss, as many of their comrades did in private industry, but in little pockets of respectability which had a different character simply because they were clothed with the dignity of the State. The CGT in their eyes was not a convenient army to be used for the destruction of the State, but an instrument that would enable them to deal and negotiate more effectively with ministerial committees charged with the business of regulating working conditions and wages.

It was inevitable that as the civil servants took a controlling grip on the policy-formation process of the CGT the organization would accept the move towards broadly comprehensive economic planning. In 1934 “The CGT Plan” was announced by the confederal administration. Instead of abolishing the capitalist State the plan called for the creation of new arms of statism on which representatives of organized labor would have official positions. Some nationalization was proposed, but the majority of provisions in the plan were aimed at setting up a machinery of controls for a tightly reined national economy. The supremacy of parliament was reaffirmed in best republican style.

Thus had the face of French syndicalism changed. The fervent *esprit* of the syndical revolutionaries almost evaporated in the postwar decade. The CGT became a civil-service-dominated group, and, moving in the direction of moderate trade unionism, was busy burying the practice, if not the theory, of apoliticism. It accepted, moreover, the permanence of the Republic, lobbied to sit in on its councils, offered advice, and in 1934 during the Stavisky riots took to its defense in street fighting against Fascist-inspired demonstrators. This drift is even more significant when it is recalled that the rival CGTU retained the vigor of earlier class consciousness. In fact, it condemned two broad social-security statutes of 1928 and 1930, which the CGT had campaigned for, as “sleep-inducing for the proletariat.”

CGT Strength and CGT Weakness

The strength of the CGT during the first decade and a half after World War I is difficult to estimate precisely. This is in great part due to the general disinclination of French unionists to concern themselves with the formalities of organization—membership dues are low, duties are almost

nonexistent, and interest in business meetings is transitory at best. Few unions offer services of any kind to their adherents; rarely are strike funds available. Under these conditions all official membership figures must be viewed with considerable suspicion. Rarely do they represent much more than approximations of the number of members the union leadership thinks *should* be adhering to the organization. A widely accepted estimate shows that probably no more than 6.3 per cent of workers employed in private industries by 1936 belonged formally to any unit of the labor movement.¹ Of this tiny figure a heavy proportion was centered around the Paris region, and it was there that the CGTU had its biggest battalions. The most stable unions of a non-Communist orientation in industry were those of the traditionally Guesdist Northeast, where, incidentally, the local labor leaders kept close and often warm ties with Socialist politicians. Whereas there were few privately employed workers in the CGT, in contrast to large forces of public servants, it must be remembered that some of these latter (for example, the railroaders and postal workers) were more "proletarian" in terms of wage scale and nature of occupation than many laborers hired by private employers. On the whole, however, it may be concluded that the CGT could not be considered a mass worker movement; it had not been before the war, and would not be until it could plumb the hundreds of thousands employed by private industry. At the same time the CGTU commanded an even smaller following before 1936, controlling only a few traditional fiefdoms around the Paris and Pas-de-Calais areas.

Socialist Strength and Socialist Caution

The Socialists quickly established their popular supremacy over the Communists after the postwar split. Their success, however, was even then illusory, often based on the sacred electoral tactic of "republican discipline." This demanded that in any run-off election between candidates none of which had won a clear majority, the strongest candidate should be given all the votes of the left. Very often, of course, this meant that the Socialists, standing ideologically between the Radicals and the Communists, reaped enormous undeserved benefits. Under these conditions there developed an inevitable relationship with the Radicals who were more often than not allies in a political campaign. This necessary intimacy demanded a degree of common agreement between the two major parties of the left. By seeking such an understanding the SFIO was obliged to moderate even its public pronouncements of Marxist faith. In the 1928 election the process of doctrinal deemphasis in order to maintain working relationships with the Radicals reached its ultimate absurdity. The common ground on which the two parties agreed to support one another's candidates was reduced to a single demand for "*l'école unique*," or free, state-supported secondary schooling. Although this had been long a foundation stone of the republican tradition, it lay only on the periphery of any Socialist program.

Republican discipline did pay off richly, however. Whereas the Communists polled just over a million votes and seated 14 deputies, the Socialists with 1,698,000 votes won 100 places in the Chamber. The temptation to trade socialism for republicanism on the hustings was already becoming very large.

Throughout the twenties and early thirties the parliamentary Socialists followed the path of maximum political caution. The Party had devised as early as 1924 the policy of "supporting" but not "participating" in governments of the left of center. Many party discussions during the ensuing years revolved around the question of Socialist duty in regard to "support," "participation," and "conquest of power." The more doctrinaire staunchly held to the view that only when the Socialists had won a complete political victory and were in the lead of a substantial popular majority could they complete their revolution of destiny. Any sharing of political responsibility before this time would inevitably result in the obscuring of Socialist goals and a relaxation of the faith. On the other extreme the moderate reformists, among them those who had favored the entry of certain party leaders into the war cabinets, argued that support of even non-Socialist premiers without a sharing of ministerial portfolios was a shameless abandonment of responsibility.

Léon Blum succeeded in procuring agreement for the middle position of, first, support and then, if the Socialists had a majority in the government coalition, "exercise of power." This view was rationalized on the ground that the Socialists could thus better manage the affairs of bourgeois society, better protect the interests of the working class within it, and, most optimistically, step up the rhythm of change leading from the old society to the new. Blum's warning that under no circumstances could these tactics be considered as replacements for the necessary period of implementing the full victory of Socialist power was not much understood either within or outside the Party.

These theoretical posturings and the tactics implicit in them succeeded in separating more and more the parliamentary party members from the ranks of Socialism as a whole. The Party came to be increasingly an organization aimed at manipulating the electoral mechanism of the State. There was little evidence of a "Socialist public" or "Socialist life" existing at the community level. Candidates running under the SFIO banner were selected by voters from a group of other republican hopefuls often not as a matter of faith, but on the basis of the usual diverse criteria inherent in the democratic choice. Party membership throughout the period was less than one-tenth of the total popular vote polled. The Party newspaper, *Le Populaire*, an official organ edited by the recognized leader, Léon Blum, limped along with daily sales rarely reaching 50,000. Obviously the Socialists were not building up, much less maintaining, a revolutionary company of Frenchmen tightly organized to serve in the creation of a Socialist future.

There were, of course, some pockets where there existed true Socialist communities, such as the cities of Roubaix and Limoges. Towns like these, entirely in the hands of Socialist administrations, displayed some evidence of low-cost public-housing projects, municipally operated nursery schools, and a degree of enthusiasm for civic entertainment which often turned out to be Party functions. Here there was cohesion and a sense of significance in belonging to the SFIO or calling oneself "socialist." Unfortunately, elsewhere the normal relationship of voter to Party was usually confined to a sceptical support on election day.

The Popular Front

All of the changes in organizational personality and the evolution in practice of ideological faith that had been unfolding in the 1920s on the non-Communist left were finally reflected in the Popular Front of 1936. This striking and ultimately unsuccessful political experiment cast its shadows far into the post-World War II world. The character and strategies of all leftist parties were established for years to come, as was the pattern of relationships between them.

It is not our purpose here to offer a capsule history of the whole Popular Front episode, but merely to sketch out the impact of this coalition period on the organizations involved. The two labor unions, the CGT and the CGTU, were combined in 1935 to the accompaniment of enthusiastic and overoptimistic salutations to the principle of proletarian unity. The Socialist and Communist parties did not actually merge their personalities but, at the warm insistence of the latter, established a system of joint cooperation unknown on the European left since 1919.

The Popular Front coalition as an instrument of political power was never fully effective in drastically reshaping the French economy or society towards collectivism because it included the moderate-liberal Radical Socialists. In the long-range healing of the political divisions on the left the Popular Front was not much more successful, but briefly at least, vast numbers of men and women on both sides of the gulf separating the working class shared once more a breath of the revolutionary past. Marching together in street demonstrations, voting en bloc on the Assembly floor, and sharing official duties in local and national unions, French workers of both Socialist and Communist persuasion vicariously snatched moments of exultation which had long been embedded in their political consciousness by the revolutionary tradition, but had been dulled and diverted by division, apathy, and the social maladjustments of postwar France. The new spirit was extremely short-lived, and perhaps its main significance was that it could have been so quickly subverted. The speed with which the coalition fell apart and the revived *élan* of the left deflated revealed the transparent nature of the new marriage, and consequently created new suspicions and doubts between the two elements for the future.

The subversion of the spirit of solidarity in the early days of the Popular Front resulted from three not unrelated causes: (1) disillusionment within the coalition (and within the now unified CGT) with the tactics of their new Communist allies, (2) inability of the Popular Front government under Socialist Premier Léon Blum to carry out fundamental social and economic reforms, and (3) the slow realization that the skills needed to meet pressing French problems were no longer those best furnished by militant and disciplined revolutionaries, but rather those of accomplished economists, tireless legislators, and a dedicated bureaucratic apparatus. These will be examined in turn.

Communist Tactics

On the political level, relations between Communist and Socialist parties in the Popular Front were never more than cautious. Much talk was made on the Socialist left wing about the possibility of eventual fusion of the two parties, but a large majority remained unmoved by these suggestions. The real difficulties stemmed from the fact of separate existence, that is, there were antagonisms similar to those between two bourgeois parties in a coalition, each fearful lest the other win a lion's share of the perquisites of power and popular acclaim. Because the popular-front tactic was part of the Communist International's over-all continental policy, additional strains developed eventually between the two Marxist parties. In an attempt to enlarge the base of the so-called anti-Fascist front the Communists were eager to extend the hand of friendship and cooperation as far to the right as possible, and in so doing frequently overlooked the political imperatives of their Socialist comrades. It was in this manner that the Communists forced reluctant Socialist endorsement in 1935 for an expanded national defense policy, a step which cost the SFIO a sizable slice of pacifist support, including that of Party Secretary General, Paul Faure. Sniping and re-crimination between the two major parties of the coalition, and the effort by the Communists to play off the Radicals against the Socialists, continued throughout the Popular Front period. Socialist veterans are still using the example of these years as a warning to those who now urge a return to joint activity with the CP. The official line was always working-class unity—later expanded to the far more comprehensive French Front concept—but in actuality the Communists were unscrupulously trying in every way to discredit their closest rivals.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the Blum government ran into heavy waters in its efforts to bring the Popular Front demands for social and economic reforms to fruition. No collectivist society resulted from the first French government directed by a Marxist. Blum, who had been dubbed "the dilettante-revolutionary" by fellow *normalien* Hubert Bourgin, took the helm after the smashing electoral victory of the left in 1936. The Socialists were involved in their first experiment with "the exer-

cise of power" and quickly discovered that only the Radicals, and not the Communists, would join them on the ministerial benches. Thus the new government was compromised from the beginning. It could not push its policies too far out of fear of losing Radical support, and a part of its majority remained aloof from responsibility and caustically critical.

Failure to Achieve Fundamental Reforms

The institution of a fully planned economy and wide nationalization was impossible so long as the government was dependent on Radical votes. However, even within the Socialist Party itself there was wide disagreement over the degree of rigid government operation of the economy. In 1932 long and bitter intraparty wrangles had begun on the proposal of one faction to accept the ideas of the then fashionable corporatist planner, De Man. The result of this enervating debate, which raged for two years, was to split away a small bloc of militants who refused to accept the Party's decision to reject the idea of collaboration between capital and government planners. A less obvious consequence of the ideological conflict was that a large number of the faithful had been touched by *planiste* philosophy and many others were deeply troubled by the confused state of Socialist theory. Blum himself—half humanist, half Marxist—added nothing essentially new to the argument. He remained at best an interpreter of Party tactics.

Most of the reforms which the Popular Front Government did institute were in the form of direct answers to immediate working-class demands. The Matignon agreement raised wages, authorized a system of collective bargaining, and recognized labor's right to organize. The forty-hour week and paid vacations for all workers were interesting innovations, but could hardly be called a fundamental reshaping of the economy. Only nationalization of the armaments industry might have been labeled a socialist move. Even this, however, was as much a response to pacifist pressure and a recognition of the popular "merchants of death" myth as it was implementation of Marxist dogma. This was a pattern of *ad hoc* social legislation, not socialization.

Foreign policy proved the sharpest wedge dividing the Socialists and Communists—and the latter hammered it hard indeed. They heaped scorn on Blum's head for his failure to recognize his duty as an international Socialist in the Spanish Civil War. The responsibilities of an international revolutionary party had always been gravely discussed in official conclaves, but this was the first opportunity that France had had under Socialist leadership to clearly take a stand consistent with the imperatives of Socialist faith. Furthermore, the Loyalist cause in Spain was an immensely popular one with the French working class. Once again, however, Blum, the responsible French Premier, overcame Blum the revolutionary. Unprepared for foreign entanglements, he was fearful of exposing France's east flank while engaged on the territory of a western neighbor. The Communists

meanwhile could, and did, point with pride to the material assistance the Soviets were giving the Loyalists. It seems clear now that thousands of idealists, mistakenly or not, scrambled away from the SFIO at this point, disappointed with the cautiousness of international Socialism and bewitched by the apparently grim determination of international Communism.

The Inadequacy of Revolutionism

Perhaps the most telling commentary that can be made on the breakdown of the left coalition of the mid-thirties was that it failed to appeal to, or make use of, those human qualities which brought men together despite ideological differences. The original, almost spontaneous optimism of the early days of the Popular Front reflected a resurgence of the revolutionary spirit. Men of the three major left parties and men of both unions were anxious to join a movement which would be bigger than their own differences. They hoped that the inadequacies of their own beliefs, parties, and unions would be somehow overcome by the greater purposes and accomplishments of the new movement. Frenchmen of the left had moved together in the past and wrought great triumphs over enormous odds. The Popular Front would be another such momentous experience. The advances of the past had always been won by revolution, bloodshed, "activism" of some sort. In a vague way many of the early enthusiasts for the Popular Front felt that this was how the new movement would reach its goals. Somehow they reasoned that their revolutionary past had equipped them for such a struggle; and indeed their political and syndical leaders had been telling them for years that this was the case.

Unfortunately, the hard problems which the Popular Front met, and of which it tackled only a few, were not those that could be solved in the streets. They were turgid matters of financial policy; they included the necessity to arm at the same time that the State was called on to provide new and costly social services; they were at all times conditioned by the veritably insoluble complexities arising out of the worldwide depression beginning to affect French markets; and all were intensified by the queasy fears springing up over Germany and Spain. What the Popular Front needed was skilled thinkers and courageous legislative leaders. The politicians soon discovered that any efforts made to blunt the controlling power of selfish business interests were frustrated either by the Radicals of their own coalition or by safely intrenched bureaucrats with bourgeois interests of their own. In many areas advances were made by the Blum government towards modernization of a hopelessly moribund economy, but such advances were the result of occasionally brilliant and devoted service by intellectual members of the movement. This was not the stuff which could buoy up the mass following or maintain its eagerness and devotion. The temptation to fall back into mutual recriminations and antagonism was

rarely dispelled by sustained periods of joint activity and participation. Social democracy, to the disappointment of its supporters in France, at least, turned out to be a rather dull and not wholly earth-shaking preserve of the planners, statisticians, and economists.

The Sit-Down Strikes

That the working class itself expected to play a popular and activist role was evidenced by the rash of almost spontaneous sit-down strikes which broke out all over France in June of 1936 just after the smashing electoral victory of the left, even before the Blum government could take office. These strikes had an unusual flavor: they were not controlled or led by the CGT bosses, and rarely by CGTU leaders; they were not pointed at specific goals; and they were, almost without exception, self-disciplined by elected strike representatives within the plants. The workers' demands differed from locality to locality, but most contained pleas for better conditions, fewer hours, collective bargaining—in short, labor as opposed to Socialist demands. In some plants red flags were raised, but the concept of capturing the productive machinery of the State for and by the working class was rarely expressed and nowhere represented the wishes of a majority of the strikers. Henry Ehrmann says of the timing of these strikes: "The workers spontaneously sought a way to strengthen the government's intention of abolishing misery and forcibly imposed humbleness."² Goguel captures something of the spirit of the sit-down strikes in the following description:

The result of the elections had given to many workers the feeling that they had become the masters. This idea was ingrained with considerable force among the personnel of the enterprises scheduled to be nationalized. In occupying them it gave the impression of priming their expropriation, anticipating a bit the legal decisions to follow, but assuring at the same time against all weakness of the new Chamber.³

There was, however, no universality of demands, no definable pattern in the agitation. The Blum government stepped into this atmosphere of exhilarated but controlled anticipation with what one critic described as "a desperate hope for the masses to be good." The strike situation was solved in the most cautious way possible, legally, and in collaboration with management. The Matignon agreement mentioned above was quickly hammered out and gratefully accepted by the frightened employers. Any thoughts that the sit-down movement might expand into a truly revolutionary situation went aglimmering. Instead of exploiting an orderly and self-disciplined rank-and-file labor occupation of the factories to establish without violence a socialist society, the government offered social reform. Blum failed to create for himself and his party a revolutionary *mystique*, and he could hardly have been expected to when at least a third of his

coalition were members of a stolid bourgeois party with little interest in the dissolution of capitalism.

The signing of the Matignon settlement provoked a curious response in trade-union circles. Where only days before the workers had been squatting defiantly in their factories, they now turned to busying themselves with the delicate details of concluding bargaining contracts with their employers. For assistance in this unaccustomed duty local militants turned eagerly to their federation headquarters—the very group of union functionaries they had scorned and ignored during the strikes. The latter quickly made themselves indispensable to local units, and the membership rolls of the CGT ballooned from under a million to 5.3 millions within a year. Since it was largely in the federations where Communist influence had been dominant before the CGT-CGTU merger that the contract traffic was heaviest (i.e., heavy industries), Communist organizers quickly entrenched themselves by unflagging service in the moment of greatest demand. Millions of hitherto uninterested workers who flooded into the unions found themselves entirely dependent on the technical services of Communist negotiators. Their hold was never relinquished, although they were represented on the official policy-making body of the reunified CGT in the ratio of only one for every three non-Communist officers—a ratio which had had meaning only before 1936 as a reflection of CGT and CGTU relative strength. No other single factor was as important in the Communists' capture of the working class as their rapid capitalization on the opportunities afforded them by the institution of collective bargaining.

The new strength of the CGT dried up almost as quickly as it had blossomed. Many deserters were workers who had joined the CGT to benefit from the advantages promised by collective bargaining and soon realized that the Popular Front was not attacking, and probably could not attack, the basic sources of disharmony in the society. Though no doubt thankful for the small gains the working class had made, they were deeply moved neither by the exhortations and proselytizing activities of local Communist shop stewards, nor by the democratic-republican idealism that Blum was beginning to mold into a new Marxist revisionism but which had not delivered all that it had promised (see Chapter Four).

To add to his bewilderment, the average worker was soon exposed to a tearing internecine struggle within the CGT between the moderate or Jouhaux element, in uneasy unity with the Communists, and a vocal, traditionally syndicalist faction of pacifists and bitter anti-Communists. Only the shared interests of the first group in the issue of national defense held them together. The pacifists and anti-Communists, including some of the most influential names in French syndicalist history, never completely abandoned the CGT but stayed to win a goodly share of support in the circles of top leadership and contribute to the general fear, paralysis, and appeasement which characterized French labor at the eve of World War

II. Later, during the Pétain regime, many of these same "Belinists," as they were called after their spokesman, played prominent roles in the semifascist, semicorporatist Labor Front imposed on the working class.

Conclusion

How to gauge the impact of the Popular Front on the non-Communist left? Without question it proved that where Socialists and Communists competed in a rough-and-tumble political arena, the Communists could win hands down. The Communists gained strength throughout the period despite the fact that their rivals had emerged from the 1936 election with an impressive lead in parliamentary seats won (146 to the Communists' 72). Of the two Marxist parties only the Communists could boast true understanding and effective use of organizational and colonization techniques. Having gained key points of power for themselves by sharing in the government majority, they exploited most efficiently any chances to cement their advantages. Furthermore the Communists had energetically recruited among the new fringe labor groups of Polish, Italian, and Algerian immigrants who had poured into France during the twenties and were regarded with some suspicion by native French workers fearful of maintaining their own jobs. These immigrant groups were used by the Communists to do the dirty work of their vast apparatus, directed by French intellectuals and working-class revolutionists. Whereas few French workers could be counted on to maintain for long a disposition to serve any cause—as is demonstrated by the apathy of the rank and file in both major unions—these newcomers were perfect legmen for their Communist bosses.

If there had been doubt before, the Popular Front once and for all laid the ghost of revolution stalking behind the Socialist Party. This is not to say that tradition-minded militants (mostly intellectuals) did not continue to conjure up visions of the apocalyptic destruction of capitalistic society, but rather that no one any longer took them seriously. The Party was now wedded to the concept of a cautious welfare State, established in dignity, with regard for personal liberties, and only gradually imposed. "Governmentalism" would no more be the bugaboo for Socialists it had been in the past; it was to become in many instances a duty, and often a fiercely desired duty.

French unionism also foreclosed a myth during the Popular Front. Syndicalism of the nineteenth-century variety lost its meaning and was replaced by what Perlman calls the "job-conscious type" of unionism—bureaucratized, apathetic, and (in the case of the Communist element) the politicized tool of a Party. If the new form snuffed out one of the lights which had emotionally illuminated the workers' advances, it at least could be argued that it was better adapted to the new atomistic character of the twentieth century.

In perspective, the Popular Front succeeded only in its republican efforts,

that is, the dissolution of the Fascist Leagues, Parliamentary social reform, etc.; and perhaps this is the best measure of the new role of the non-Communist left. Abandoning revolution and the harshest implications of collectivism, whether through conviction or necessity, the Popular Front had in the process of shifting its social and political personality moved into the undefinable political sector of republicanism.

chapter four

Postwar Deflation of Socialism

Although the spirit of unity behind the Popular Front very early lost its punch, there was no formal dissolution of the arrangement until the curious episode of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. The Communists were then systematically expelled from the CGT, but in many places they were quitting posts where they would be replaced by less efficient and less experienced union officials. As it turned out, the door remained open for the return of these organizers when the Communists were welcomed back to the fold. Some Socialists, although many were still perplexed by the necessity of abandoning pacifism, began cautiously to call for an awakening of the spirit of national defense in a rather tepid imitation of Jacobinism. It became convenient under these conditions to condemn the Communists as betrayers of the Republic.

Within a short time the Republic was indeed betrayed, but it was not the Communists who were wholly to blame. The collapse of France before the German invader swept all institutions and leaders of the left, if not into obscurity, at least into underground activity. The Socialist Party by no means escaped the indignity which all of the Republic shared. Public apathy, the spirit of pacifism, the paralysis of fear, and disgust with the machinations of rightist politicians and German sympathizers all contributed to the confusion and indecision which characterized all sectors of French political life as the Third Republic went down for the last time. Of the 152 Socialist deputies still living when the Assembly was asked to grant full powers to Marshal Pétain (thereby assuring the institution of an absolutist, semifeudal state), only 29 voted against the new leader, and 83 approved the move. The remainder either were absent or abstained. Some of the seeds which pacifist Paul Faure had sought to sow earlier in the decade thus bore fruit. Many of those who compromised themselves at Vichy later joined the Résistance movement and personally vindicated themselves, but the Party itself was to bear the scar of Vichy for many years. The Communists, of course, who had been forced underground in September 1939, were never called on to make the cruel decision between Pétain and some unknown alternative.

The Socialist Party and the Résistance

As if to emphasize its hesitancy the Socialist Party, reconstituted extra-legally during the Occupation, chose not to enter the Résistance movement as a unit on the excuse that many of its members already belonged to purely resistant organizations. The Communists, meanwhile, were capitalizing on their underground existence since late 1939, and were before long operating in many areas as *the* Résistance organization. A Socialist journalist revealed unconsciously a great deal about his Party when, commenting on its Résistance record, he wrote: "Abruptly we, who were used to legal action and to the forms of democratic life, were obliged to pass into clandestine action, for which we were not at all prepared."¹ The official record of Party activity reads, not like that of an active revolutionary group (at a time when revolution could only have been respectable), but like the busy comings and goings of men determined that when the unpleasantness had passed away their old political organization would be ready to re-emerge little changed.

The other side of the Socialist Résistance history is considerably brighter. First, there were many individual Socialists all over France, such as Guy Mollet and Daniel Mayer, who served impressively as officers of major units of the movement. Second, at the headquarters of the provisional government of Free France at Algiers Vincent Auriol and André Le Troquer occupied positions of responsibility second only to that of De Gaulle. Most important, however, were thousands of Party rank-and-filers all over France who, unlike the Parliamentarians, had not been so abruptly brought face to face with their consciences in July, 1940, had outlived the hysteria of the first Pétain summer, and were in a better position to make decisions consonant with their political ideology than their national leaders. To a considerable degree these men were to become the backbenchers of the new Party after Liberation. By the very nature of their political apprenticeship it was not surprising that Jacobinism was strong among them. This Republican militancy combined with the warm humanitarianism of Party leader Léon Blum, who won deep public respect by a vigorous self-defense at his German-inspired Vichy trial, was to provide the ideological flavor of postwar Socialism.

Misplaced Confidence at Liberation

The confidence and hope which the Socialists felt at the moment of liberation were almost unbounded. Unfortunately they built on sand. Socialism, as Léon Blum said, was everywhere, but this was precisely one of the Socialists' greatest weaknesses. The Communists, of course, wanted socialism, as did the left wing (and that meant a good share of the early leadership) of the newly formed Catholic MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) party. Even General DeGaulle was committed to a limited

program of nationalization, if only to remove pockets of the most glaring inefficiency in the national economy. Almost without exception the Résistance organizations under Communist and Socialist prompting had demanded broad measures of economic and social reform for postwar France. If, however, there existed a lively current of excitement about the promise of economic reform and a new Jacobin fervor reawakened by the Résistance which had restored a measure of the average Frenchman's self-esteem, it did not follow that the public was longing for the leadership which the Socialists were anxious to offer. The Party erred by identifying this vague groping for new solutions as a public acceptance of its particular program. Socialist theoreticians failed to see that all the important parties of the left and center were offering different versions of the same reform programs, that what they mistook for Jacobinism was often a latent chauvinism, and that perhaps much of the new interest in the left was a negative disgust with the discredited right rather than a positive belief in Socialist goals.

Reminded by their leaders that it was their duty to guide the new leftist sentiment of liberated France, the Socialists plunged eagerly into the task of politicizing that sentiment. Immediately after Liberation the first elections to local municipal councils seemed to confirm their judgment. The Socialists won an impressive victory, sweeping most of the major cities with the exception of Paris and Lyons. The Communists also gained heavily, however, and political observers were quick to point out that both parties (and especially the Socialists) were profiting at the expense of the Radicals, who were reduced mightily from their prewar strength. With the Communists emerging from the Résistance as the "party of 75,000 martyrs," and in control, if not of all proletarian sympathies, at least of their larger institutions, the SFIO was beginning to take over the role which the Radicals had previously played—as the party of the lower middle class in whose hands communities were disposed to place the management of their own very personal affairs—without thereby compromising their views on more significant national matters.

The comeuppance of the Party was signaled in the elections for the First Constituent Assembly in October, 1945. Although making a respectable national showing, the Socialists took a disappointing third place behind the Communists and the MRP. Succeeding elections proved conclusively that the trend had turned against them. By November 1946 they had fallen from four and a half million votes the year before to less than three and a half million. This decline has continued steadily ever since.

The Positional Advantage of the SFIO

Although the low member of the Big Three parties in postwar France, the Socialists lay ideologically between their two major rivals. In two important ways this position seemed to satisfy many of them. First it meant that the Socialists could play the role of mediators between the Com-

munists on their left and the Catholics on their right in keeping together the government coalition of the early postwar years. This they did with considerable skill, and as keepers of the balance they won a disproportionate share of political plums in the early provisional governments. Félix Gouin was first President of the Consultative Assembly and later of the First Constituent Assembly. Finally he became Chief of Government when De Gaulle resigned in 1946. Auriol took over Gouin's job as Assembly President. The *rapporteurs* of key constitutional drafting committees were most often Socialists, and so were the top departmental officers, including those in charge of economic affairs. The Fourth Republic's first two cabinets were presided over by Blum and Paul Ramadier. Vincent Auriol became the first President of the new Republic.

Although holding dead center of the left coalition paid off handsomely in terms of jobs, the Socialists saw in it another advantage. Many hoped that this strategic position would win for them not only the perquisites of office, but also the greatest opportunity to organize and then lead a popular mass grouping tied to some new kind of humanitarian socialism. From the Communists they would draw on those who boggled over the Russian ties of the CP; from the MRP, those whose urge for social reform was stronger than their clericalism. As early as September 1944 the underground Secretary General of the SFIO called out for "a sort of grand rally, both republican and revolutionary, grouping together all those who wish to work for social and economic transformation, without losing for a single moment respect for the notion of liberty. . . . We shall be the true social democracy."² Political analyst Raymond Aron at one time set considerable store in this possibility. In 1946 he wrote: "The Socialist Party has had, I believe, a chance which it did not seize. At the moment of Liberation it could have revitalized itself by contact with the Résistance and thus have taken the head of a vast formation—let us call it *laborite*—of which it would have been the inspirer and chief."³ A share of the blame for this failure belongs with the Party itself, specifically its fear of performing an honest self-reanalysis, and its repugnance for the "*laborite*" label.

The Conflict over Party Doctrine

The struggle within the SFIO for a new personality raged for two years after the Party emerged from underground existence. It consumed the energies of men many of whom were holding positions of public responsibility. It created fissures within the ranks that have still not closed, and it ended where it had begun—by a denial of recognized conditions and a decision not to leave the old path, despite shrinking public support. In broad form the debate centered around two issues. The first was an attempt by Léon Blum and a moderate wing to secure acceptance for the humanist philosophy he had been fashioning between the wars, and a policy of close integration with the trade unions. The second was often considered a func-

tion of the first. It was the Party's attitude on the question of unity with the Communists.

It has already been noted that the Socialist Party retained the original revolutionary Marxist creed after the Communist split following World War I. No serious attempts were made to alter it during the twenties and thirties despite the fact that it no longer represented the views of more than a handful of doctrinaires. Jaurès was far more often quoted than Lenin or even Marx in campaign literature, and the French revolutions were fought over and over again, leaving the Russian revolt to the Communists. To keep on the left, however, Party strategy seemed to dictate that, at least in principle, good Socialists should not willingly allow themselves to be outflanked. Blum, troubled by the gap between theory and practice and sensitive to the growing number of "sentimental socialists," as opposed to Marxists, who were multiplying in disgusted reaction to the perfidy of the right, wrote in his prison cell in 1941:

It was Jaurès who added to Marx the demonstration that the social revolution is not merely the inexorable consequence of economic revolution, but would satisfy also the eternal demands of man's reason and conscience. . . . Thus Jaurès infused into the materialist conception of history all of the idealism of the creeds of democracy and human brotherhood.⁴

Elsewhere in this testament of faith Blum opines comfortingly that the aftermath of war will not be "insurrectional violence" if the proper forces can direct the potential enthusiasm of the workers into practical ends "and so prevent it from exhausting itself in impotent convulsion."⁵ Thus the revolution has become by a convenient metamorphosis an "impotent convulsion." Vincent Auriol meanwhile was urging the admission to socialism of all Résistants, Radical Socialists, and Left Republicans. In doing so he was reiterating a longing of many Socialists during the interwar years to aim their appeals at a broader public than the working class. Because of the fear of Communist militancy and the enormous postwar attraction of its bizarre wares, a cry went up from the Socialist doctrinaires against this softening and broadening of the orthodox, class-conscious Party creed. Guy Mollet, a young *résistant* from the North, son of a laborer but himself a *lycée* professor, was the big gun in the counterattack of the doctrinal purists. Frightened by any abandonment of Marxism, he warned that appeal to a following not primarily based on the industrial proletariat would amount to an acceptance of the notion that the latter was already completely captured by the Communists. To a large extent, of course, this capture was an established fact: the Communists then controlled most of the significant industrial federations of the CGT.

It was at the National Party Congress in the summer of 1945 that Blum chose to defend his recognition of the changing emphasis in French Socialism against the sniping which had already begun. In the wrangle that fol-

lowed his speech on the general theme of socialism and the primary importance of individual dignity, Blum was flayed by the Party left-wingers under the lead of Mollet and another intellectual, Jean Rous, for substituting Jaurès for Guesde. The spirit of Guesde was defended by Rous as "the invitation not to an abstract sentimentalism where so often hypocrisy hides itself, but to rigor, to toughness, to the militant life, the spirit of sacrifice." Blum was reminded that Guesde, unlike Jaurès, never allowed his life's work of organizing the northern provinces for Socialism to be interrupted by mixing in the sentimentality of the Dreyfus affair.

An essential paradox is here revealed which symbolizes the curious atmosphere of the struggle for personality in the Party. Guesde did indeed organize the northern provinces with high efficiency before World War I. He used Marxist analysis to explain the modern conditions of their exploitation to the tired, gray masses, but perhaps, as Lucien Laurat has pointed out, Guesdism

took hold of the workers only to the degree that its propaganda was attached to certain old ideas of French pre-Marxist Socialism whether coming from Blanqui or Louis Blanc. The movement welcomes that which has nourished it since its origins; it accepts the Marxist ideology in what it has of general value. . . . It remains refractory to the conceptions which, coming from the German school, do not correspond to its real needs.⁶

The suggestion, of course, is that Guesdism succeeded in the North certainly because Guesde was a skilled organizer, but that socialism became a living faith in the area because it was anchored to the French fraternal and egalitarian traditions.

The proof of Laurat's pudding is in the eating. The major support of Blum (and his disciple, the Secretary General, Mayer) throughout the struggle for a new socialist philosophy came from the northern sections of the Party, or the so-called Guesdist stronghold. More importantly, these heavily populated federations of Le Nord and Pas-de-Calais were the only ones with a substantial working-class membership in the Party. These were the two industrial sectors of France where the Socialists had kept pace with the Communists in attracting labor's votes. A spokesman for the largest of the two really proletarian federations, Le Nord, showed the temper of his organization when he challenged a critic of Blum: "Would you deny the generous socialism of Jaurès to put into action the utilitarian socialism of Lenin?"

Debate on Party creed was intense at the top level of the hierarchy, but for most of the rank and file the issues at stake developed and were debated around a more precise question: Unite or not unite with the Communists? Before beginning an analysis of Party views on this thorny problem it is necessary to mention two considerations which lend a perspective to all views offered and to all positions taken. First, both the Socialist and Com-

munist Parties were until mid-1947 members of all postwar governments. Along with the MRP and some smaller parties theirs was the joint responsibility of maintaining what had come to be known as the *mystique of the Résistance*. This was never satisfactorily defined; at best it probably meant no more than a powerful urge to sweep away all the rottenness of prewar France and reconstitute a bold new Republic wedded to social progress, political freedom, and a new status for the working class. That this vague union was eventually obscured by Communist reservations and the return to respectability of the political right, which deflated the popular support of the MRP, does not detract from the original force of the early spirit. Under these conditions any attempt to separate the Marxist parties was regarded with high suspicion for a number of years after the Liberation. Second, the labor movement was once more unified, and had been since 1943. Since both parties claimed to be of and for the working class and since the working class, at least officially, was content to negotiate with its employers from a single union base, the compulsion for the political representatives of the class to join hands appeared very strong.

The Issue of Unity with the Communists

Unity had first been proposed to the Communists by the Socialists during the occupation period, at a time when the latter presumed they would be able to assert a numerical superiority. As late as November 1944 Daniel Mayer was proud to announce that it was he who had convinced De Gaulle to take the Communists into the Provisional Government. In December a *comité d'entente* was created consisting of leaders of both Parties who were to map the path of cooperation. The *comité* was divided into subcommissions, one planning what joint action the Parties could take on day-to-day problems, the other exploring the possibilities and methods of achieving organic unity. Only the first of these subcommissions produced any agreements, and these were not impressive. It would be wrong to say that the Socialists' early interest in unity with the Communists was purely for propaganda purposes. More accurately it can be described as the result of confusion about the nature of their own identity—their role in the postwar world. While Socialist leaders were sitting on the *comité d'entente*, and were proclaiming that anticommunism was not the order of the day, they were at the same time warning against the attachment of the French Communists to Soviet Russia. Clinging to the shreds of pre-1917 ideals, Socialist militants continued to issue public statements about the quest for unity which they never really savored nor fully understood.

The conditions for organic unity which the Socialists had elaborated late in 1944 were not designed to be enthusiastically accepted by the Communists. In addition, there was little disposition on the part of the Socialists to enter electoral contests on joint lists with the Communists. The insistence on the pursuit of unity was far more the fulfillment of a doctrinal

imperative than a meaningful policy pursued as part of a realistic program. It was not surprising that the Party's stable of doctrinaire intellectuals was the most vocal in demanding diligence in the negotiations for unity. Representatives of federations where the Communists had not had much strength before the war were generally sceptical but usually approved with reservations. It was only the Party delegates of the heavily industrial federations who from the beginning warned against the policy of close collaboration—to say nothing of organic unity. These war horses pointed out that the *courant unitaire* was strong principally in those areas peopled by the newest Socialists who had not lived through the difficulties with the Communists since 1920, but were veterans only of the Résistance honeymoon.

This theme was to be repeated more and more often as the bright illusion of working on a day-to-day basis with the Communists began to tarnish. Socialists of the northern provinces, Marseilles, and the Bordeaux area had known how difficult this would be, but elsewhere past experience had not been so pointed. Those who were working on municipal councils and in the unions where they were associated daily with Communist officials began to sense the real meaning of the distinction between the Marxist parties. The intellectual leadership of the Socialists, however, had either had little acquaintance with the problem (i.e., in the unions) or had been primarily national Party figures or parliamentarians, in which positions they were working with Communists whose actions were somewhat controlled by public scrutiny.

The Socialists continued their equivocation on the question of unity throughout 1945. Even Blum, although he represented with Mayer the right wing of the Party, was still too much tied to the memory of the Popular Front and the social reforms made possible by coalition with the Communists, and was loath to accept and act upon the gap which existed between the two parties' conceptions of human relations. Thus while Blum was doing his utmost to emphasize the humane qualities of Socialist thought as distinctive, he was still willing to string along with the charade of holding out the promise of eventual unity to the Communists. The SFIO leftists, meanwhile, were anxious to keep the two parties moving closer together and charged the leadership with the stalling tactics of offering the Communists impossible conditions. The French public was puzzled, to say the least, by this performance, and the leadership potential of the Party began to shrink.

Mollet's attack on the Mayer leadership of the Party centered around the two points of making effective the work of the *comité d'entente* and guarding against modification of the Socialist creed, but inevitably other issues were introduced to add weight to the charges. The editorial policy of *Le Populaire*, relationships with a small Résistance Party, the UDSR (*Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance*), and the control of the Parliamentary delegation by the Directorial Committee all figured in the

final showdown in the August 1946 Party Congress. Mayer's annual report as Secretary General was rejected by the delegates; he immediately resigned and was replaced by Mollet. The left wing, however, had only won one battle. A resolution on the subject of unity with the Communists was extremely cautiously worded because by now even the most hard-bitten proponents of unity were growing uneasy over Communist strategy. In the elections to the Party Bureau the leftists, although winning the Secretary Generalship and one other spot, saw four offices go to the moderates. The Directoral Committee was also heavily loaded with Blumists. There was something prophetic in the speech by Daniel Mayer on the first day of the Congress when he saw that his own ouster was inevitable:

Let us suppose that tomorrow Guy Mollet will be Secretary General of the Party. He will be by his position within a few weeks obliged to defend the Party against the invasions of Bolshevism. He will be, I am convinced, obliged to brake down on unity of action, of which he has declared in his resolution not only that it is desirable, but that we should proceed in that direction with a maximum of effort.⁷

Of course Mayer was correct. By the next annual Congress only a tiny minority stood up for continuing negotiations with the Communists. Ramadier, the Socialist Premier, had tossed the Communist ministers out of his government, and the Party was heading into the bleakest period of its history—participation in the Third Force.

Conclusion

What was the record of the Socialists in this, the first phase of the bright, hopeful postwar world? They had failed, as Aron observed, to supply an answer to those groping for new solutions to the human problems which had bedeviled them before the disaster of 1939–1945 and which in many ways were intensified by the agonies of a liberated but destitute France. Instead of applying imaginative techniques they had politicized the unique spirit of hope that burned hotly in the Résistance. They had used its symbols and slogans to gain political office, and had only too late discovered that a return to the politics of the discredited Third Republic only bored the public. Those of the Party who had tried to build a mass movement on a new base by appealing to the flaming sense of social and human justice in many Frenchmen, and by offering strong defenses for individual dignity in a democratic Republic, were rebuffed by the doctrinaires who chided them that they had best brush up on their Marxism. One left-winger during a debate on Blum's effort to change the Party doctrines trumpeted that he thought the Party was in great danger when it called itself "democratic." From the reaction of the working-class federations of the Party to all this it seems probable that the Molletists overestimated the attractiveness of stern Marxist dogma. More significantly they failed to

realize that the drive to appear identical with the Communists, while at the same time not being Communist, was not very attractive to those who worked side by side with Communists—nor did it fool anyone.

In the matter of public policy the Socialists had eagerly taken responsibility to a degree not merited by their strength, and in periods when responsibility was most burdensome. The provisional governments and the first two cabinets of the Fourth Republic faced reconstruction and rationing problems which could be met only by methods distasteful to the public. Government officers soon discovered that instead of receiving public cooperation from a self-sacrificing citizenry, as happened in the British postwar experience, the old social conflicts inherent in French history reemerged quickly after Liberation. Furthermore, the legacy of illegality lingered from Occupation days and provided the average Frenchman with an even deeper than normal distrust of his government. Under the circumstances the Socialist Party declined precipitously in voting strength and in the degree of popular sympathy it could evoke. When it entered the Third Force phase of postwar history it was reduced to the status of a weak partner of middle-of-the-road coalitions. Political power in reaction to Communist threats on the one hand, and the shadow of De Gaulle on the other, shifted in mid-1947 from the left to the center. By this time the Socialists had so compromised themselves that they were to remain prisoners of the center coalition until 1951. They could perhaps rejoice that they were sacrificing themselves to maintain the Republic and democracy, but they were not strong enough to lead it to social democracy.

Perhaps the greatest failure of the Socialists, however, was their inability to comprehend the changes which had taken place within themselves and within the society to which they offered their leadership. This question will be examined in the final chapter.

chapter five

Postwar Labor Divides

While the Socialists of postwar France were floundering with their consciences over the knotty problem of whether to combine with the comrades on their left, the non-Communist trade unionists were struggling desperately to maintain an unhappy solidarity within the reunified CGT. The Communists had been welcomed back to the underground CGT in mid-1943 and were offered a ratio of officerships proportionate to their strength in 1939 except on the top executive committee, where the ratio was to be five non-Communists to three Communists. The Belinist faction was now thoroughly discredited as a result of its affinity for the Pétainist regime and was, of course, denied any representation on the executive committee. Although a necessary move, this excommunication considerably reduced the number of non-Communist officers in the union movement as a whole. The Communists wasted no time in entrenching themselves both at the local and federation level to a depth unknown before the war. In various localities where they had won control of the Résistance apparatus they were able to conduct purges of non-Communist militants on charges of being sympathetic to the Belinists, thereby efficiently disposing of many rivals for union leadership.

This troubled reconciliation of French labor survived until the last days of 1947. At that point the non-Communists in a final act of desperation broke with the principle of working-class unity to set up their own central, the CGTFO. By then, however, it was already too late. Much of the enthusiasm which this act of courage otherwise might have been expected to arouse in French labor circles was dissipated by long months and years of temporizing and indecision. Compromised before its birth, CGTFO began a separate existence in circumstances so confining and limiting that it was never able to realize and act upon the ideals which had caused it to split away from the CGT.

Non-Communist Syndicalism and the Résistance

Syndical leaders who were Communists and syndical leaders who were not brought with them from the Résistance different legacies into the postwar world. To be a Résistant meant many things. In some cases—and this

applied by and large to the Communists—the Résistance was a period of total submersion. Communism as a way of life could only be practiced clandestinely, and known Communist individuals lived their daily lives underground. For others the Résistance was a shadow life into which they occasionally, or frequently, descended when their normal day's work was done. Communists were by definition outlaws; others, if they wanted to retain their real identity and simultaneously operate against the forces of Vichy and the German occupation, could assume a dual personality. When this latter group did so, it was, of course, with the risk that their efforts for the Résistance would be overshadowed by what was seemingly collaborative (or better, passive) acquiescence in public policy. A bitter critic of the Jouhaux labor elements described the strategy of this faction as being that of a "technical existence with the Vichy administration and a political existence with the Résistance organizations tied to London or Algiers." In this connection it is important to note that the Vichy administration outlawed only the uppermost hierarchy of the labor movement. Local unions and even departmental unions could continue to operate, but not, of course, under known Communist officers.

The whole question of whether the type of syndicalism which Jouhaux had been attempting to mold in the prewar period, with its emphasis on collective bargaining, job control, and the seating of labor delegates on Government economic councils, was close to the corporativism which Laval was attempting to create is a fascinating issue, but here a tangential one. Suffice it to say that early criticisms of the Vichy Charter of Labor—the government-controlled union organization—from such staunch Jouhaux adherents as, for example, the Office Workers (Employés) Union of Paris, were largely technical in nature. Although within a short space of time almost all organized labor was arrayed against the Laval regime, non-Communist labor elements were, generally speaking, under some compulsion to prove themselves both during and after the occupation period.

As it became apparent that the Communists were seriously challenging the seats of power so long held by moderates, a new organ was created to give expression to labor Résistance propaganda of a non-Communist character. This journal, *Résistance Ouvrière*, later rechristened *Force Ouvrière*, became the voice of all those who had doubts about swallowing whole the Communist blueprints for the postwar world. Eventually *Force Ouvrière* was to be the reluctant spearhead of a rank-and-file revolt against the Communist bosses of the CGT.

Force Ouvrière and Syndical Dogma

What did the non-Communist unionists offer their following during and immediately after the Liberation? In essence there were two main points of syndical philosophy which the Jouhaux moderates kept hammering at in the pages of *Force Ouvrière*. These oft-repeated fundamentals were

the familiar ideas of working-class unity and an apolitical trade-union movement. Only the second of these principles could be employed as a weapon to expose the colonization tactics of Communist organizers, and this stratagem could not be used until the first principle of labor solidarity had been severely strained. The concept of proletarian unity was not unassailable as far as the Communists were concerned (although they too were playing the same tune), because it was their faction which had split off from the CGT in the early twenties. The more reformist CGT, however, had spent most of the last two decades reminding itself of its position as heir and embodiment of the original syndicalist movement. It was aided in this notion by the continuity symbolized in the person of Léon Jouhaux. The dissidents who had left the CGT to set up the Communist-controlled CGTU were always regarded in terms of formal theory as strays from the flock. When unity was reestablished during the Popular Front it was hailed as a welcome implementation of sound theoretical postulates. The fact that the same difficulties which had caused schism in 1921 brought about Communist expulsion in 1939 seemingly did not tarnish the enthusiasm for the dogma of solidarity in 1944.

The insistence on unity of the proletariat by the editors of *Force Ouvrière* was not entirely a captious retreat into orthodoxy. To have raised too soon the banner of division would have entailed the risk of being tarred with the anti-Communist brush at a time when anticommunism and fascism were popularly synonymous. Top executive posts still held by the non-Communists would have had to be abandoned in the event of schism. The Socialists, instead of offering aid and comfort and lighting the way to a separate identity for the non-Communist unionists, were themselves deeply divided over the same issue. In fact as late as Christmas 1946 the official theoretical organ of the Party was condemning the first fissures in the solid organization of the CGT opened by non-Communist dissidents.¹

The Rank and File and the Concept of Unity

First suspicions as to the wisdom of unity at all costs came not unnaturally from those workers who had to live on a day-to-day basis with their Communist comrades and were thus exposed to the crude colonizing tactics of the latter. The central editors of *Force Ouvrière*, although by definition men not willing to accept passively the Communist domination of the CGT, were as journalists and union bureaucrats partially divorced from the rough-and-tumble struggle for control. In addition they felt, as do all French journalists, some obligation to maintain the philosophical level of their readers. The fairest criticism is that they sacrificed leadership for doctrinal exposition. *Force Ouvrière* leadership dropped the ball early in the game, and when by default it took over the organization of the Central in the winter of 1948, it had already forfeited much respect.

Syndical Independence

Complaints about the electoral tactics of Communist militants to gain control of local and regional unions started to appear in the columns of *Force Ouvrière* late in 1945. Shortly thereafter the editorial policy of the journal began to emphasize the theme of syndical independence. On these grounds the Communists could be at least indirectly attacked in the name of keeping politics (i.e., Communist politics) out of syndicalism. Oddly, the most effective polemicist in the barrage was no friend of Jouhaux, but a staunch (if primarily intellectual) proponent of revolutionary syndicalism, André Lafond. In a classic restatement of early syndicalist philosophy he wrote:

It [the independence of syndicalism] ceases, despite hypocritical denials, when a political party achieves mastery of the direction of the union movement and imposes on it through its lieutenants its own watchwords. It ceases when the syndicalist movement, no more being free, becomes subordinated to this party and its influence is used only to amplify the propaganda of this party.²

Considering the prewar activity of the CGT, these sentiments were a bit anachronistic, but they had the value of appealing to historical shibboleths which die late in the hearts of Frenchmen. A week after Lafond's call for total independence Albert Gazier, then a Socialist minister, announced his resignation from the Confederal Bureau of the CGT in line with the independence policy of the non-Communist faction. A year before Gazier had argued that he was opposed to a strict interpretation of the doctrine of keeping syndicalism out of politics on the ground that problems of the national economy in which unionists had a legitimate interest were now irrevocably tied to politics. A more extreme view was put forward by Delsol, non-Communist Secretary of the Gas Workers Union. In 1945 Delsol argued that the CGT should not even take notice of the Constituent Assembly because the creation of that body could not be considered a revolutionary act.

A third view, between those of Gazier and Delsol, slowly became accepted as representative of the thinking at *Force Ouvrière*. This was the position of powerful, but sick, old, and tired (as his critics claimed) Pierre Neumeyer, chief of the holding union which controlled all the massive civil-service federations. Describing himself as a jealous guardian of syndical independence, he cautioned, "We have the duty to concern ourselves with the orientation of the Constituent Assembly. . . . It will create the government which should give to syndicalism its real place in the affairs of the nation." There is no better summary of the prewar CGT's concept of a professional syndicalism, delicately synchronized with the mechanisms of government control of the economy. Once this philosophy was accepted the sharp separation between unions and politics lost much of its meaning.

First Fissures in the CGT

Following the CGT Congress in 1946 in which the Communists finally nailed down their victories over the reformist elements by changing the method of voting to favor the largest industrial federations, which they had successfully colonized, a small faction of Anarcho-Syndicalists walked out. They issued a manifesto beginning: "The CGT is dead; the CGTU has succeeded it!" Meanwhile trouble was brewing in the always militant Postal Federation. The Communist officers had called a limited demonstration strike for a single day in July. The call to return to work, however, was widely ignored, and independent strike committees sprang up all over France to protest the policies of the Minister of Posts, a prominent Communist deputy. This was a simple revolution from the rank and file, but *Force Ouvrière* did little to help the strikers. A vote of discipline by the National Confederal Committee revealed the weaknesses of the non-Communist forces in the CGT. In the minority were six federations, of which three were civil-service units, and only thirteen departmental unions. Eventually the strikers set up an autonomous union, although a small minority of the disgruntled remained within the CGT but inclined toward *Force Ouvrière*.

Discontent continued to grow apace in many federations, especially among the railroaders. A convention of a group known as the *Friends of F.O.* was held in May of 1947, and in midsummer the Railroad Federation was split like the Postal Federation. As the rumbles of revolt were growing louder and louder, Jouhaux, the symbol of non-Communist leadership, one of the two General Secretaries of the CGT, and a contributor to *Force Ouvrière*, was busying himself with the representation of French labor at the ILO, UN, and FSM (*Fédération Syndicale Mondiale*). When not abroad Jouhaux devoted most of his time to his duties as president of the newly created Economic Council. His speeches and writings during the troubled years after his return from German captivity showed an astonishing want of interest in the purely local problems of syndicalism. The Communists profited from the preoccupations of the only non-Communist of great stature.

As more and more knots of non-Communist workers began meeting regularly in various parts of France to discuss life under Communist union bosses, they often found that their one outlet for expression was the editorial page of *Force Ouvrière*. In the elections to the labor councils which administer Social Security funds the only contests were usually between CGT candidates and CFTC (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens*) candidates, but in April of 1947 several hopefuls ran under the label "F.O." to distinguish themselves from Communist officials. It is clear, however, that the journalists in Paris considered their paper only a clearinghouse for expressions of dissatisfaction, and it was not

until late in the same year that any significant consciousness of heading an organized movement began to appear. In fact, rank-and-file workers, desperate over conditions within their own unions, had to pin the credentials of leadership on most unwilling and unprepared men at the offices of *Force Ouvrière*. As has been noted, those in the postal and railroad unions who had broken away from Communist tutelage, but saw no hope in the Jouhaux faction's reluctance to assume control, had set up independent organizations of their own.

The Strikes of 1947

The catalytic agent which forced the final rupture of non-Communist elements and the CGT was the wave of Communist-masterminded strikes of the fall and early winter of 1947. Freed from the responsibility of participation in the Government by their exclusion from the Ramadier cabinet, the Communists had begun a series of powerful strikes as early as June, primarily designed to test the strength of the new Republic. Each effort was given a political complexion by its inspirers, straining the traditional union impulse of the non-Communists to maintain solidarity. At a November convention of the Friends of F.O., the first organized on a national scale, Jouhaux delivered a curiously equivocal speech in which he suggested that its purpose was to air dissatisfactions with the CGT majority in order that scission might be avoided. This definition of purpose was not warmly received by all the delegates, especially those of the northern industrial areas.

During the second week of November 1947 the Communist majority on the National Confederal Council of the CGT voted a general strike for wages, which was in fact to become a bloody and unlimited assault on the proposed Marshall Plan. The protests of the non-Communist minority were brushed aside in an acrimonious session. Louis Saillant, hitherto an independent member of the Confederal Bureau and one-time International Secretary General of the FSM, put the differences between the two groups into their proper perspective when he announced he would stick with the majority because "If it came to a choice, he would prefer the Soviet Union to the United States." Thus the minority of the CGT's top leadership went down to strangling defeat before this truculent display of power by the majority. By their long months of hesitation they were partly responsible. The words of an observer written only two months before seemed now prophetic:

They [the Jouhaux group] are quiet today—or better are feigning to be absorbed in other jobs. The result is that the Communists continue to eat, leaf by leaf, the confederal artichoke.³

It was the local units of *Force Ouvrière* sympathizers who first sounded the alarm over the political nature of the new strike movement. Generally

speaking, however, the turmoil whipped up by the Communists over economic demands was difficult if not impossible for true syndicalists to fight. At the point of open industrial conflict for no matter what purpose or cause, defection was always considered the most blatant form of class treachery, and on these grounds many workers with real doubts about the purposes of the strikes were loath to disobey the orders of Communist chiefs when they were issued. In many areas resistance to Communist authority took the form of failing to show up for demonstrations during the strikes or disobeying orders to report for local meetings. At the same time, the disenchanted worker judiciously stayed away from the workshop.

By the end of November, although the strike momentum was beginning to wane, the whole national picture had been disfigured by the events of the preceding weeks. Ramadier's government had fallen; bonuses to Social Security payments (paid out of general funds in the Treasury) were used as bribes for the masses by the new government, to the amusement and scorn of the strikers; sabotage had broken out on the railroads; and the minority officers of the CGT were then in such an anomalous position that they found themselves acting as intermediaries between frantic government ministers and their own labor comrades in the Communist majority of the CGT.

Before the violence and bitterness of November and December Robert Bothereau, a veteran organizer in the civil service and editor of *Force Ouvrière*, issued a statement arguing that the existence of two distinct tendencies in the CGT did not indicate the failure of unity, but on the contrary the bicephalic organization of the CGT (one Secretary General was the Communist, Frachon, the other was Jouhaux) recognized and made provision for internal differences. What was the feeling after the bitter general strike had ended? It seems to have been only slightly modified, as though Jouhaux and his associates were finally aware that they were not really compatible with their bedfellows, but feared the consequences of a showdown even more than they disliked continuing a distasteful cohabitation. Indeed, for Jouhaux to have called for a separation at this point would have constituted an admission that his whole strategy of collaboration with the Communists since the end of the war had been a grave blunder.

Revolt from Below

The revolt from below, as it had in the past, finally forced the reluctant hand of Jouhaux leadership. At an F.O. conference held December 18 the minority members of the Confederal Bureau were requested by a resolution from the floor to offer their resignations from that body. The Conference had been called at the urgent request of Friends of F.O. local units (some of which had taken the step of no return by resigning from CGT affiliation before sending delegates to Paris). The whole meeting

was apparently in full control of the rank and file from start to finish. Only ten days previously at a high-level meeting of F.O. leaders—those that would occupy the platform at a congress or conference—a decision had been reached to continue the fight for syndical independence *within* the CGT. Now the rank and file reversed this decision.

The editors of *Force Ouvrière*, when the game was over, found themselves in control of the only piece of national machinery around which a new central headquarters might be built. In the first number of the journal to appear after the split was made Bothereau wrote very little about the role of the rank and file in the affair, and instead sought to justify the rash step taken by the minority officers in acceding to the demands of its following. "We were," he wrote plaintively, "being treated like hostages on the Confederal Bureau."⁴ This was at best a timid beginning.

Old Wine in New Bottles

In due time the homeless refugees from the CGT were welded together into the semblance of a rival syndical organization. A delegation from the federations which had already departed into autonomy negotiated successfully for a rapprochement with the new organization leading to fusion. There were many regrets that the journal of such a dynamic movement, which had become its mouthpiece by default and scarcely displayed the vigor of its reading public, should provide the locus of the new leadership on the grounds that it would tend to graft its character onto the organization and perpetuate it. This criticism was vindicated by the arrangements adopted at the Constituent Congress of CGTFO in April 1948. Jouhaux, Neumeyer, and Bothereau were elected permanent officers. Five other members were named to the National Bureau, only one being an Autonomist. The Bureau then proceeded to nominate candidates for the larger Administrative Commission, on which the Autonomists secured only two places out of thirty-five. The most vital and courageous elements of non-Communist labor had been effectively hamstrung by the representatives of old-time syndical bureaucracy. Of the new Bureau only two members (other than Lafond, who was the choice of the Autonomists) were not old reformist veterans of union bureaucracy at the national level.

Under these circumstances it was not surprising to find that the enthusiasm of some militants during the actual days of struggle with the Communists did not long survive the incorporation of the scattered dissenters under the banner of the new Central. Some of the federations considered fiefdoms of the Jouhaux leadership were discovered to be more anti-Communist than pro-CGTFO. Some, such as the Teachers' Federation, went into autonomy; others (the Printers' Federation) remained defiantly in the CGT, although professing their disgust with Communist directives. Tens of thousands more individual workers drifted away from any union affiliation. Most analyses agree that whatever masses of troops

CGTFO did command (and within two weeks it was claiming a million adherents), the great bulk was composed of civil servants. Neumeyer and Bothereau, the top Jouhaux lieutenants, both came originally from apprenticeship in the Federation of Civil Servants.

The militancy of some newcomers to CGTFO was jarred perceptibly when Jouhaux presented his draft statute for the new organization at the Constituent Congress. In a section dealing with political liaison the document read in part:

Considering that syndicalism should not be indifferent to the form of the State, and that it could not exist outside of a democratic regime, the F.O. locals recognize in the syndical movement the right, which could become a duty, to provoke or accept rapprochements or collaborations with a view towards unity of action to be decided upon when the situation expressly demands it.⁵

Not only was the Jouhaux definition of the role of the unions within the State taken to be an abandonment of traditional syndical philosophy by the more doctrinaire, but the suggestion of possible unity of action with the Communists (against De Gaulle?) was regarded by Jouhaux's opponents within CGTFO as nothing more than a bald attempt on the "Chief's" part to keep his anchor out for a possible return to the conditions of the past. The text was, however, adopted by a thumping 4 to 1 majority, the civil-service federations voting en bloc, and CGTFO pushed off resolutely into a sea of ambiguity.

CGTFO and the Socialists

One further aspect in the mosaic of compromise surrounding the birth of CGTFO remains to be explored—the role played by Socialist politicians in the events leading to schism. Protestations of complete independence from any political influence by the leaders of the journal *Force Ouvrière* both before and after the rupture of CGT are misleading, and on examination, hollow. Apoliticism was very often used as a cry of injured innocence by the Jouhaux group. On the other hand, the Socialists who were from time to time involved were secretive about their operations, obviously not anxious to reveal their true sentiments about the mixture of politics and unionism.

In a very real sense, however, much of the steam had gone out of the theory of apoliticism as a consequence of the organizational confusion created by the Résistance. The distinctions between parties, unions, civil liberty associations, and even armed units of the Maquis tended to fade away as special holding-company-type organizations of the Résistance were set up to coordinate and direct activities. Organizational personalities became blurred in the common effort to reestablish the larger entity of the Republic. In the first provisional Consultative Assembly there were representatives of a variety of organizations sitting side by side. Syndicalists

were sitting as Socialists and vice versa. Many union men represented Résistance units. The Communists never paid more than lip service to the principle of apoliticism anyway, and many non-Communists, as has been noted, were prone to argue that Jouhaux's governmental policies of the thirties had stripped the theory of any real meaning for them. Modern group politics had put a real premium on the multiloyal militant.

All of the Socialist involvement in CGT politics was the work of right-wingers, but of these many were simultaneously protesting the necessity of maintaining the unity of labor. In May of 1946 Daniel Mayer and Jules Moch visited a large convention of Socialist Railroad Workers, and a few weeks later came the announcement of the creation of the Friends of F.O. in the same area. During the postal strike, which resulted in the defiance of Communist leadership, the independent strike committee received at least moral and psychic encouragement from Socialist members of the government. Augustin Laurent, ex-Socialist minister and editor of *Le Nord Matin*, party organ in the industrial provinces, was instrumental in opening the split between Communists and non-Communists in the Railroaders Federation.

If the Socialists can claim some credit in helping to separate dissident elements from their Communist leaders, they cannot by the same token be blamed for herding them back to the moderate and cautious CGTFO. No Socialists were involved in the negotiations which brought the autonomous federations into the new Central. At the same time Léon Blum recognized more clearly than the syndicalists of the *Force Ouvrière* offices that the revolts against the Communists were largely the work of the rank and file. In sum, the best that can be said about the Socialists' fishing in troubled waters is that, although it may well have been more effective than the assistance furnished by the old Jouhaux leaders, it was significant only to the extent that it could be used for declamatory purposes. It was quickly employed by the enemies of the CGTFO as a propaganda gambit to discredit the orientation of the new Union. Old traditional syndicalists raised serious doubts about the "Socialist issue" a few weeks after the infederation of the new Central. If the rank and file were no longer much concerned about such matters, they at least respected the warnings of such personalities as André Lafond and Pierre Monatte.

For those who still retained an objective point of view the intervention of Minister of Labor Mayer in the affairs of CGTFO immediately after its birth caused grave misgivings. The Socialist Minister turned over to the new organization thirty million francs, legally reserved by the government from the assets of the defunct Charter of Labor for use by new or re-created social organizations after the Occupation. The CGT had already benefited from these funds in the rebuilding of its departmental unions, and Mayer's action seemed to endorse the principle that by dividing itself an organization could multiply its benefits. Far worse in the eyes of many was the

implicit suggestion that a government minister could manipulate the satisfactions at his disposal to create, or at least to encourage, organizations favorable to his own political views. In fact the self-righteous disclaimers offered in their own defense by the officers of CGTFO, under a barrage of criticism, had little or no effect because the amounts previously given to the CGT and the CFTC (ten million and four million francs respectively) were soon made public. The disproportion between these sums and that given CGTFO was all the testimony necessary to convince those who thought they smelled collusion between the Socialists and the Jouhaux union. It became usual for political pundits to refer to the CGTFO as the tool of Third Force governments, in which the Socialists were now trapped as unwilling supporters of the *status quo*.

In the facile name-calling technique of French politics CGTFO won the title of "strikebreaker" in the violent Communist strikes of the spring of 1948. This bitter episode plowed new—and many believe permanent—divisions in the French left, since the Communist strikers went so far as to abandon the security watch in the mines, thus necessitating the use of government troops to prevent the destruction of this vital element in the nation's resources. Socialist Minister of the Interior Jules Moch was the unhappy official who had to issue the orders for this police action, thereby winning for himself Clemenceau's old title, "the first cop of France." When the CFTC and CGTFO miners returned to the pits at the urging of Labor Minister Mayer under the protection of security troops, many old-time unionists, Communists and non-Communists alike, were troubled by what they considered the policy of "social peace" suggested by harried government officials and agreed to by the CGTFO. This criticism was a telling blow at the non-Communist leaders who were desperately trying to assure the workers that their militancy was beyond reproach, and was in fact more effective than the CGT's because it was not controlled by the tactical necessities of a political party.

Conclusion

In conclusion it seems clear that the two principal doctrinal weapons of syndicalist faith had not served the Jouhaux forces well. (Perhaps the charge is better reversed: Jouhaux had misused the two weapons.) Unity had been pursued, as it had been in the Victorian psyche of the SFIO, for its own sake, blindly, until pursuers were so reduced in strength and wind that they were forced to seek other solutions. Apoliticism, or syndical independence, had been trotted out when it was too late to be useful as a rallying cry. It proved to be somewhat of a boomerang, because it could not be applied under a double standard of morality. The Socialists, who were widely accused of violating the pretentious chastity of the CGTFO, probably were not as guilty as their critics claimed they were, but suspicion was enough to damage a reputation built on self-assertion.

In a very real sense the new Central was born and reached a rather jaded maturity at the same moment. Led by the group which had moved the prewar CGT towards a closer and closer collaboration with government, it quickly reserved most of the plums of officership for its own kind, thereby snuffing out much of the dynamism which had bubbled up from the rank and file. Worst of all, perhaps, is the probable conclusion that those dynamic and energetic leaders who had emerged from the hand-to-hand struggle with the Communists for control at the local level (as in the autonomous federations) were trapped in another paradox. They owed their success and their following to a sincere and deeply entrenched belief in syndical independence—a concept that has less and less practical reality in the modern world of plural sentiments, ideological polar pulls, and delicately balanced national economies. This dilemma will be further explored in the concluding chapter.

chapter six

The Third Force, Opposition, and Impoverishment

Two periods are clearly definable in the post-schism history of the non-Communist left. One is bounded by the fate and fortunes of the Third Force, when a precarious power was maintained by the political center between mid-1947 and June 1951. The second period follows the 1951 general election when the locus of power moved to the right. Some examination of these epochs is important only in so far as it tends to reveal that the forces which the non-Communist left had put in motion earlier by its post-war strategy and tactics continued to shape its orientation and exacerbate difficulties already created. The area of maneuverability remaining to the Socialists and to CGTFO has been at all times very small since late 1947. Perhaps as a partial consequence of this, the popularity of both movements has continued on the wane. Today the non-Communist left has neither troops nor the best of leadership. It can only dream of past glories, not future ones.

The Third Force

In essence, of course, the very nature of the Third Force was negative. It was designed to provide some area of responsible authority for the democratic center parties threatened on the left by Communists and on the right by the strident new party of De Gaulle. The architects of the Third Force hoped it would have a broad public appeal among large masses of Republicans, and as an anti-Communist and anti-Gaullist force it undoubtedly did. However, the partners of the coalition could never agree on more than a minimum program of things to be *for*. The result, naturally, was a tendency for parliamentary leaders to stick together just to preserve the government—although they often reserved their mutual cooperation until almost too late. Blum had originally expressed the hope that the center grouping would be a great “common partnership of Republicans, Democrats, Socialists, and Syndicalists,” but the militants of CGTFO made vigorous protestations against this proffered embrace. CGTFO remained, officially at least, aloof.

The Third Force soon symbolized for many Frenchmen a policy of

compromise and survival between the extremes on the political spectrum; it became, as it were, a whole way of life that was built on patchwork and "making do" within the small area of movement still possible when large sectors of the political public were excluded from the game. Most regarded it as the least bad of three unhappy alternatives. The usual Socialist program was, under these circumstances, deemphasized to the point of virtual disappearance. For a party which had only recently passed through a doctrinal purgation of some bitterness, and had given nominal approval to radical leadership, this was a strangely chilling new departure.

Meanwhile CGTFO had rapidly endorsed the Marshall Plan and the Monnet Plan for the revitalization of French industry, and strongly favored price controls as opposed to wage increases—the latter a responsible although not politically enticing stand. All of these points were regarded kindly by the Socialists, especially the last, to which they had tried to anchor much of their postwar economic policy. However, the Catholic MRP party, which controlled the Quai d'Orsay throughout the Third Force period, won all honors for French internationalist policies, and domestic economic reform was invariably blocked by other members of the coalition. The economic planning and vigorous price controls demanded by the CGTFO leaders and the Socialist Congress at Lyons in the summer of 1947 were rebuffed by the Radical members of the Third Force coalition, and even where Socialists were able to prod their ministerial colleagues to a limited program of planning, exceptions were made and loopholes provided which largely neutralized such efforts.

Socialists and Radicals both bickered with the MRP over clerical issues and by the time of the 1951 elections had produced more than a little strain between the democratic parties on the specific matter of government aid to Catholic schools. Contrariwise the Socialists quarreled bitterly with the Radicals on colonial problems. The Radicals remained doggedly partisan to French white farmer interests in the North African territories, to the exasperation of the SFIO, which sensed the swelling popularity of the Communists' anti-imperialist propaganda.

One danger which all these differences within the Third Force alliance tended to sharpen was the widening gulf between the Socialist parliamentarians and the rank and file. Each year the Party deputies were given instructions by the national Congress which presumably laid down a line of policy for the Party to follow in its public life. These same deputies, however, were under a general compulsion to cooperate with their fellow parliamentarians in the Third Force so as to retain the equilibrium of responsible government. Annually they were forced to appear before their own rank and file and explain the compromises with their instructions they had had to make to preserve the coalition. Inevitably a grassroot attitude grew that the parliamentarians were cheapening the Socialist faith, that they were in part responsible for the continued economic difficulties of the

new Republic, and that tighter controls would have to be fashioned by the Party as a whole to bring them back in line with the rank and file.

Two public issues of the early Third Force period deserve some special attention because the manner of their handling revealed the inherent weakness of both major non-Communist organizations. One is the whole confused problem of the Indochinese War and its enervating effect on the Republic. The other concerns the CGTFO's hopes to lead—in collaboration with Socialist ministers—a broad labor movement for price control.

The Third Force and Indochina

While the Communists were still in the government, as late as March 1947, they themselves eased the way for various organisms of the left to straddle the fence on Indochina. The Communist ministers at that time had voted for the government's proposed policy to continue prosecution of the war (although the Communist backbenchers were allowed to abstain). Both the SFIO and the journal *Force Ouvrière* had backed consistently all efforts to negotiate with the rebel Vietminh forces from the time of Blum's caretaker government forward. Some Socialists were actively engaged in personal efforts towards this end on the scene of hostilities. Despite these attempts, however, the Party succeeded only in modifying the policies of the various governments to which it adhered, always going along with the final decision of the coalition majority in a showdown.

To a certain degree CGTFO also equivocated, although it was not so constrained by the responsibility of office as was the CFIO. In 1949 André Lafond wrote gloomily that he had some doubts whether the country was immediately capable of taking charge of its responsibilities, "including those built for it by French imperialism."¹ This was the tenor of the official line towards the problem which in the minds of many Frenchmen, well schooled in Marxist analysis, was a simple matter of either pulling the imperialists' chestnuts out of the fire or ignoring them completely. In another sense the attitudes adopted by the Socialists and *Force Ouvrière* paralleled those of the Third Force, allowing a drift with the stream of events rather than evoking vigorous efforts to control and channelize them. This was an easy course—the easiest course in a situation where permanent civil servants and army officers thousands of miles away were constantly presenting their political superiors in Paris with *faits accomplis*.

The Socialists were keeping the conscience of the Third Force cabinets on Indochinese policy, but they never had the strength to make acceptance of their views the price of continued collaboration. Accordingly they accepted the responsibility of protecting the French troops engaged in Asia as the only reasonable path open in an unhappy and unpopular situation. The ambiguities of the French policy in Indochina became so marked by 1950 that the Socialist Party issued the following curiously unrealistic statement of its position:

The French Government [should] place before the Security Council of the United Nations the problem of Indochina, and pledge before the UN to recognize, once peace returns, the real independence of Vietnam in the freely entered body of the French Union, and to withdraw its troops at the demand of a Vietnam government issuing from free elections.²

A few months later the most acid critic of official Socialist policy, Dr. Léon Boutbien, who had himself visited Indochina in the search for new solutions, was forced to admit that if the exigencies of international politics demanded that France hang on to save this part of Asia from Communism, then she must be given the means to reduce the toll of French troops. Thus the practice of compromise with the center parties had finally run full circle and had produced a pessimistic moderation even among the most intransigent of the Party.

CGTFO and the *Cartel de la Baisse*

The concern with price reductions by the CGTFO led that Central shortly after its inception to combine with the CFTC in pursuit of this end. Leaders of the CGT were for good reasons of their own directly opposed to such a policy, because they were making political capital with their demands for wage increases. Wage boosts always made good propaganda for the Communist Party, and because the CGT was by all standards the most powerful of the three major unions, they could occasionally point with pride to specific hikes they had won for the workers. The fact that continual raises contributed to the inflation spiral, which a decontrolled national economy had allowed to mount, mattered little to Communist tacticians, who were playing the game for reasons other than the protection of the national economic structure. If Communist-produced wage boosts gave only illusory and temporary relief to the workers, at least they were tangible results of militant unionism for tired and hungry men.

CGTFO's tactical response, the *Cartel de la Baisse*, functioned in the uneasy knowledge that even in alliance with the Catholic unions the non-Communist workers were probably not strong enough to impose their views on the Government. The temptation at the local level to enlist CGT support for the campaign against high consumer prices was naturally very strong. CGTFO officers warned against this collaboration repeatedly, whereas the CFTC, with no doctrinal barriers to restrict its maneuverability and less of a compromised past to live down, permitted its local units wide latitude in picking allies. By the fall of 1948 the hopelessness of the price campaign was becoming more and more obvious, even to CGTFO national leaders; some locals were already suspect of having cooperated with CGT-inspired unity committees. In September the National Confederal Committee, under growing pressure from the rank and file, recorded itself as favoring the decontrol of all wages as well as prices and a return to un-

restricted collective bargaining for the setting of salaries. As if in harmony with the despair of the unionists at achieving a minimum level of decency for themselves by a reasonable economic program, the Socialists added to their growing list of *ministrables* the old Syndicalists, Lacoste and Pineau. The appearance of these "planners" with strong ties to the Jouhaux leadership in CGTFO only served to highlight the incapacity of the Party to make effective attempts to direct and control an economy which the other parties were abandoning to complete liberty.

The campaign led by both national unions against price rises was both wise and courageous. It was, however, maintained too long—to the point where the workers were no longer convinced of its efficacy, and were turning away to other solutions, different leadership, or apathetic disgust. The CFTC was the first to recognize that the policy had outlived its usefulness, and was flexible enough to allow its following to press for standard-of-living indemnities with other unions of whatever ideological stripe. It did not hold on to programs which had lost their attractiveness—if not feasibility—either for the sake of differing with the CGT or to give aid and comfort to helplessly floundering ministers of finance, whether Socialist or MRP. There was, after all, nothing suspect about the demands for broad wage increases. Economically dangerous they certainly were, but so too had been the whole hit-or-miss economic policy of the coalition governments. The mixture of a partially controlled and partially uncontrolled economy was being dissolved in favor of increased liberty at a time when demand was still sufficiently high, and stocks low enough, to put in jeopardy the whole natural play of the market.

If the CFTC did not feel the necessity to choose its friends with utmost caution it was because there was no real danger of losing its identity. Catholic trade unionism had developed from a wholly different social philosophy from that of the CGT or the CGTFO. Non-Marxist, and never touched by revolutionary syndicalism, the CFTC was secure in the assurance that its militants could be as energetic and aggressive as union tactics demanded without risking the submergence of its organizational personality in the embrace of an oversized and hot-spirited brother. CGTFO, whose leaders had already experienced some of the difficulties of living with Communists while maintaining what they called "the true syndicalist faith," was guarding its honor to the point of frustrating legitimate working-class goals. The leadership's hesitation in changing its tune soon suggested to many workers that the only organizations which would drive unreservedly towards amelioration of their lot were first the CGT and second the CFTC.

The 1950 elections of union representatives to local Social Security boards which administer social welfare funds revealed the fundamental weakness of CGTFO. The candidates of the CGT polled the highest number of total votes, more than doubling the combined strength of its two major

rivals, winning on some 2,724,000 ballots.* The CFTC polled some 1,250,000 votes, and CGTFO was a poor third with 900,000. Catholic Unionism, as compared to its prewar position, was increasing its popularity at the expense of both the other workers' organizations. In the Paris region CGTFO came in fourth, losing third place to a Mutualist ticket, championed by the moribund Radical Socialists. Under these conditions it is not surprising to find the Paris CGTFO leadership by May Day, 1951, announcing that it would celebrate the workers' holiday not with "carnival type parades, but with dignity." All CGTFO militants of the Seine district were urged to go to their federation headquarters to have their union cards punched. This had, of course, the double purpose of preventing the rank and file from attending scattered "unity demonstrations" which the CGT was always fond of organizing, and of keeping the real weaknesses of the Paris region a family secret. Even in those departments where the CGTFO and CFTC together polled a larger vote than the CGT it cannot be assumed that they constituted an effective opposition to the Communist union in those areas. The doctrinal inflexibility of many CGTFO leaders made cooperation with the Catholics almost as difficult as it was with the Communists. Anticlericalism was still a persuasive weapon at the disposal of the Syndicalist orator, although it rarely had anything at all to do with the ability of workingmen to combine for joint action on common grievances.

The Cost of Collaboration

Until 1950 the Socialists continued to participate actively in Third Force governments, but never once did they hold the premiership. When, in February of that year, they finally decided in face of the growing discontent of the rank and file to resign their portfolios and accept no new ones, it was already apparent that each successive cabinet was existing more and more at the pleasure of right-wingers between the Gaullists and the Radicals. After Léon Blum's death in the spring, however, the resolution of the Party not to share in what could only be an expanding discredit of official responsibility weakened, and Socialists darted back into the cabinet of Plevén formed in the early days of the Korean crisis. This time they took ministerial posts on condition that a program of specific policies be accepted by the new government. Significantly, the most important of these conditional policies consisted of various measures beneficial to civil servants and pensioners. The new character of the SFIO was displaying itself not only in its haste to serve the bourgeois Republic, but also in a determination to extract sympathies from groups on which it knew much of its strength now rested.

The 1951 election was a cruel, but not unexpected, blow to the Party.

* These are rough figures because Social Security boards are not all elected at the same time or in the same manner.

Operating for the first time under an electoral law which heavily favored the center parties of the Third Force, the SFIO lost nearly three-quarters of a million votes over its 1946 total, and represented only 11.3% of the total voting public as compared to 20% for the Communists and 17.3% for De Gaulle's RPF. The Socialists were the only major party which did not win the votes of one-fourth the registered voters in a single electoral district; its parliamentary delegation, however, was second only to that of the DeGaullists. Convinced that the voters had not appreciated their efforts to bulwark the Republic under attack, the Socialists have since the election of 1951 refused to accept ministerial responsibility. With the government coalitions moving rightward to include conservatives, and eventually De Gaullists in 1952 and 1953, the Party went over into full opposition.

As this new epoch opened some important considerations lay before the troubled leaders of the non-Communist left. Socialists and CGTFO chieftains were no better equipped to understand and act upon them than before the elections, but the facts that the Communists had begun to show some signs of weakening and the Gaullists had not fully measured up to the awesome promises made for them had afforded the Republic a slight breathing space. Desertion of the government by any one of the democratic elements would no longer threaten the very existence of democracy in France. Withdrawing into sullen "support without participation" and then into formal opposition also gave the Socialists (and their comrades in CGTFO) an opportunity to halt the process of self-sacrifice in which they had been involved. Whether they have in their own breathing space conducted a thorough and wise self-examination and reassessment is another story; at least they may be said to have won good defensive positions from which they may be expected to halt their dangerous decline in public popularity.

Some clarification of CGTFO's fuzzy doctrinal thinking was evidenced in early 1952 when the non-Communist Central joined hands with the CFTC to sabotage a strike called by the CGT to commemorate the 12th of February 1934. This date is emotionally significant on the whole French left because it marks the first occasion when Communists, Socialists, and unionists had by a show of strength discredited Fascist attempts to bring down the Republican government. A joint demonstration had cleared the way for acceptance of the Popular Front by all concerned. Now, however, the Communists were seeking to use the commemoration for the advertisement of their own particular slogans, and the CGTFO and CFTC agreed to demand an unconditional refusal of cooperation from their followings. The general strike was so unsuccessful as to pass almost unnoticed by the public, although more than one cynic remarked that it must have taken the efforts of at least a good share of CGT workers to make a CGT-inspired strike fail. Collapse of the anti-Ridgway riots in May, and the lack of inter-

est of workers from all political factions in joining the strikes following the suppression of the riots, suggested that not only was the working class growing disenchanted with Communist tactics in the unions, but apathy towards all union leadership was strong. Diversionary meetings and speeches scheduled by CGTFO organizers were not well attended, and in the one large plant, the Renault, where the Communist grip on the workers was badly shaken, independent militants appeared to have won the most influence. Among these were Trotskyites and, surprisingly, Gaullist sympathizers.

The Socialists and Foreign Policy

Despite the new position of the Socialists, now removed from official responsibility, they have continued in almost all cases to support foreign policies of a genuinely internationalist flavor. The Party has always endorsed the adherence of France to the North Atlantic Treaty, and stands solidly behind the Schuman Plan. Guy Mollet and other deputies have played prominent roles as French delegates to the Council of Europe.

Hewing to the internationalist line has, however, not been easy for Socialist leaders since they abandoned support of the government. They knew well that Great Britain (which might soon again be a Socialist Britain) would probably always be reluctant to tie herself too closely to the Continent, thereby reducing the chances of obtaining a Socialist-oriented European Community. Secondly, neutralism and its negative concepts appeared to a few, at least in the abstract, to be the perfect weapon for use by an opposition party.

The long and tedious wrangles over EDC throughout 1954 aggravated the deep political divisions in French society and finally succeeded in breaking the internationalist discipline of the SFIO. On the final vote in late August to give up the search for a form of French adherence to the plan acceptable to the National Assembly, the parliamentary Socialists divided their votes almost evenly on either side of the crucial issue. Three leaders of the anti-EDC faction, Jules Moch, Daniel Mayer, and Max Lejeune, were precipitously dismissed from the Party, despite the angry protest of backbenchers.

This ugly blow-up—the full consequences of which were not clear at this writing—does not necessarily mean that a large section of the Party has deserted its internationalist tradition. The question of French participation in EDC revolved around complex issues not always reducible to the simple choice of nationalism versus internationalism. Until the EDC vote the Socialist Party had responsibly supported “European” foreign policies of various premiers as desirable goals in themselves. No *quid pro quo* was extracted in social and economic domestic policy which might have fattened Socialist fortunes. Because of the increased strain on the narrow resources of France which NATO and other international obligations

impose, their acceptance inevitably postponed the day when a forward program of full social reform might be launched, but until late 1954 the SFIO had remained staunchly internationalist nonetheless. Perhaps the most generous conclusion that can be reached is that the gradual weakening of the Party's political and doctrinal personality has recently reduced its leaders' ability to maintain discipline without dividing itself. This is indeed a serious portent.

The General Strike of 1953

A quite new spirit in CGTFO showed itself after the departure of Socialist deputies from the government. The most telling instance of this changed spirit was the general strike of August 1953. Touched off by CGTFO militants in Bordeaux objecting to government economy decrees aimed at cutting civil-service costs, the strike movement spread so rapidly and spontaneously that CGTFO leadership was soon persuaded to put its belated stamp of approval on the action. In fact, it was never able to take over the direction of the strike; effective power over the rank and file remained to a great degree with local strike committees, some of which contained representatives of all three major Centrals, and some of which were entirely non-Communist. From a beginning in the Postal Union the walk-outs quickly multiplied to include most of the public service. Within a week, when the Communists began to get anxious that their thunder would be stolen, the movement spilled over into the private industrial field, and at this point the hand of Communist direction grew heavier and heavier on the shoulders of the strikers. As Communist organizers began calling out their biggest battalions, CGTFO and CFTC leaders adopted more cautious attitudes in fear that the early prestige which their unions had won would be eclipsed by the massive impact of the CGT. It was the former two who eventually negotiated settlements with the government that brought France's biggest strike since 1936 to a limping halt. There followed the usual recriminations, charges, and countercharges between various unions about who had been responsible for undermining the determination of the rank and file, but on the whole the best estimate that can be made is that after three angry weeks, not only the reserves but also the patience of the workers was exhausted.

This was, above all else, a political strike in the real meaning of the term. It was directed against the right-wing government of Joseph Laniel in a mood of exasperated disgust at his efforts to solve France's economic plight by adding new burdens to the working class instead of reducing the protection of small business, farmers, and professional people. Throughout the strike there existed a largely inarticulate presumption that by plunging the whole country into paralysis somehow Laniel and his cabinet would be toppled. Often the national leaders of CGTFO were reluctant to give specific commands to their restless troops in hopes that a political solution

might present itself which would clear the air. Socialist politicians did in fact busy themselves with negotiations which they felt would win credit for the Party and perhaps pave the way for a political swing to the left if they could win creditable benefits for the workers. The government ministers remained unconvinced, however, that the Socialists could in fact control even the non-Communist elements of the strikers, and finally bargains were struck between the MRP ministers and the CFTC. Somewhat symbolic of the distance between the non-Communist workers and their leadership was the embarrassing fact that the strike had caught the official Socialist newspaper, *Le Populaire*, closed down for a two weeks' summer vacation; it could not be reopened until the waning days of the excitement, and hence there was not even a mouthpiece for those who longed to put themselves at the head of their troops. If non-Communist labor had shown itself surprisingly strong and militant, the real surprise was for the CGTFO and the Socialist leadership who discovered that they were very often ignored at the same time that the Communists' bosses were.

There were no winners in this strike, although the civil service did secure a slightly more favorable minimum wage rate of 33 cents an hour. The Communists discovered that the working class was by no means entirely at its disposal, and the non-Communists failed—perhaps because of previous weakness—to exploit the possibilities inherent in the strike against the government. It seems likely that by allowing the strikes to peter out without demanding and obtaining heavy satisfactions the non-Communist leaders were displaying more fear of their Communist rivals than of the cynical collaboration between the government and business, which was willing to accept and act upon any weakness in the solid labor front. As the workers recognized that conditions would not immediately change and that Laniel would continue in power for some time, thousands more drifted off into nonaffiliated apathy.

In a sense the General Strike of 1953, as some journalists dubbed it, symbolized the fate of the non-Communist left almost ten years after the Liberation. Communist attractiveness was obviously waning, but there was no corresponding rush to the institutions of the non-Communist, non-clerical left. Years of public responsibility had meant the self-sacrifice of the Socialists as a political force. The leadership of the CGTFO, on the other hand, was hesitant to give its local militants their heads, and as a result had never, in fact, won a large share of mass confidence.

chapter seven

Myopia on the Non-Communist Left

The underlying causes of weakness on the French non-Communist left that have been sketched in this essay are numerous, but we are here concerned only with those of its own making. Basically, the greatest fault has been an inability to shake off the restrictive bonds of outworn doctrinal frameworks or to search the past for ideological strains of great vigor and durability that have survived the divisions, both petty and significant, of the dogmatists. As they have misjudged the present, many leaders of the Socialist Party and CGTFO appear also to be blandly indifferent to the probable form of the future. By way of conclusion we shall reexamine in a slightly different perspective the dilemma into which the non-Communist left has fallen and the significance to French politics of its shortened foresight.

Appeal to a Phantom Public

The most embarrassing indication of Socialist and CGTFO weakness is their unseemly efforts to serve a public which largely ignores them. Both organizations seem to be involved in a sort of child's game in which they have to imagine the presence of the most important player, in this case the Marxian proletariat. Historians are still digging to discover the moment when the Socialists were deserted by the workers in appreciable numbers, but it is probably safe to estimate that the process has been going on ever since the original political split in 1920. The fact that the prewar CGT and SFIO invariably outstripped their Communist rivals does not mean they were stronger by virtue of massive proletarian support. Civil servants were the main elements of the old CGT as they are of the present CGTFO. Although the working-class vote of the prewar SFIO was undoubtedly stronger than it is now, leadership cadres and local militants were, with important exceptions, usually lower-middle-class professional people or civil servants. The *embourgeoisement* of the Party and the Union continues at an accelerated pace in the postwar world. Now, however, this trend threatens both organizations with total eclipse because they are flanked on the left by a well-heeled and powerful Communist apparatus, and on the

right by a variety of parties and institutions attuned to traditional middle-class interests.

Some observers have questioned whether there is in fact a place for a non-Communist but leftist force in modern France. Militant Socialists and unionists have answered this query with angry denials and for the most part have taken the ostrich view that since they were just as far left as the Communists, this was not a real problem anyway. Because ideological competition with Communists is patently impossible—if one chooses to observe a minimum of individual dignity in human relations (as the non-Communist leaders obviously do)—then a new approach is not only necessary but essential.

The Need for More Flexible Doctrines

In fact the conditions of French society and the structure of the economy have changed so drastically from what they were when the guiding principles of both socialism and syndicalism were elaborated, that hardly any similarity can be said to exist. Indeed, during the interwar years Léon Jouhaux and Léon Blum quite accurately gauged the new conditions of industrial society in France and moved to adjust the operations of their organizations to them. What they could not do was translate this alteration of tactics, politics, and in the long run goals, into systematized philosophies which would replace the badly fitting and outmoded old coats of revolutionary syndicalism and doctrinaire socialism. Because of the persistent cravings in the hearts of many Frenchmen for some fabric of doctrinal faith to cling to, nineteenth-century concepts were retained while in practice they were violated daily. The resulting distortions could only weaken the whole movement by obscuring the ends of the two organizations.

Social and Industrial Change

What are the changes in industrial society which suggest the need for a more flexible approach to social and political doctrines? The human equipment of industry has lost the character it had when Marxist analyses were written. Since the beginning of World War I the number of unskilled workers in relation to more highly trained specialists in industrial manufacture has risen enormously. At the turn of the century there was only one unskilled worker to four or five professionally skilled operatives in production, whereas today there are two unskilled workers (who may or may not have a particular specialty) for each professional worker. The impact of these changes on syndicalism is obvious. As there developed a division of labor in the factory, so too there came differentiations in the union, and thus leaders found themselves drawing further and further away from their troops. Revolutionary syndicalism, the creed of the nine-

teenth century, with its emphasis on "the conscious minority," had not fitted union leaders to handle—much less to inspire or indoctrinate—the huge float of workers that washed into (and out of) labor organizations during the twenties and thirties. Unable to cope with these countless thousands, the militants bureaucratized themselves and reversed the whole pattern of traditional Syndicalist procedures.

If, as has been claimed by some, the monotony and insecurity of employment in mass-production industries produced lassitude and social apathy rather than militancy in the political syndicalists of interwar France, then it was the Popular Front and its promise (albeit unfulfilled) of nationalizations and social justice which broke the grayness of life for millions and aroused new interest in them. It seems obvious that the strikes which accompanied the electoral victory of the Popular Front coalition were not conceived in the image that the syndical revolutionaries of the Victorian Age would have wished. The strikes were in support of a political victory, they were orderly, and they were not necessarily directed to the end of bourgeois expropriation. They were, as one writer has described them, "a gigantic festival," not a grim revolution.

One possible conclusion that can be drawn here is that the workers' response to the Popular Front and the support granted it by the CGT were signs that at last the leaders of the left had stumbled on the beginnings of something more attractive to the average worker than the violence of revolutionary syndicalism and the dogmatism of socialism. Grizzled veterans of syndicalist and socialist struggles shook their heads sadly at these developments. One remarked, "To be a proletarian twenty years ago was an adventure; in certain cases in our time it becomes a job." Most of the older leaders either accepted the new conditions while retaining the vocabulary of their original faith, or accepted neither new situations nor new thinking. Class consciousness at the core of Marxist philosophy demands not only constant intellectual leadership but an equally faithful consideration by dedicated followers. The gap between syndical and socialist bureaucracy and the rank and file, mentioned above, has obviated the possibility of that intellectual exchange taking place.

Students of social psychology have remarked that the average twentieth-century worker would rather be more materially miserable as a *petit commerçant* than relatively secure as a worker. The difference between this attitude and that which agitated the militant Syndicalists of yesteryear has been analyzed by another social scientist in the following way:

The idea of liberty [in the late 19th century] was a spiritual ferment, a moral force which raised the conscience of the worker to things of the soul. The attacks [on the idea of liberty in the twentieth century] made all of this class fall into the most immediate and pressing materialistic preoccupations. . . . In fact the laboring masses threw themselves unchecked into a pursuit of material joys only because no one offered them an ideal more capable of satisfying them.¹

The inability of syndicalist and socialist leadership to interpret properly the spirit of such movements as the Popular Front and the Liberation to large numbers signaled the failure of the nineteenth-century concept of proletarian leadership in the twentieth century. There were flashes of harmony between leaders and the mass, between doctrine and practical results, but a return to day-to-day, normal activity always emphasized the changes in workers' attitudes and signaled the inroads of apathy and the pursuit of economic self-interest.

Growth of Tertiary Occupations and Commerce

Further examination of the make-up of French industrial society at mid-century offers clear proof that while the industries which depend on mass production have so organized their plants that large numbers of unskilled and semiskilled workers are employed in them, at the same time the number of skilled and considerably specialized workers in the economy as a whole is growing. The number of skilled workers has been reduced in large manufacturing plants, but is on the increase elsewhere. A geographical survey shows that in relation to unskilled laborers and low-paid clerks employed in the regions of heaviest industrial manufacture (Paris, Seine-et-Oise, Le Nord, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Pas-de-Calais) the number of technicians and specialists is lower there than anywhere else in the country. The concentration of "middle" jobs is correspondingly high in wholly rural areas. But the really significant fact is that for the country as a whole one-quarter of the national population is engaged in work of this sort in nonagricultural establishments. Thus, concurrently with the leveling off, if not decline, of the agglomerations of unskilled and partially trained workers in manufacturing, there is a noticeable upswing in the employment of qualified and technical help outside the centers of heaviest industry.

An intrinsic part of this development is the general expansion of what has been called by economists "tertiary activity."² Supporting or service industries are multiplying as fast in France as elsewhere in the modern world. Commercial establishments are growing even more rapidly than tertiary units. Of the working population 22 per cent are now engaged in commerce, as compared to 13 per cent in the United States and 9 per cent in Germany. Employment in commerce rose 15 per cent between 1921 and 1936, while the industrial population was declining 2 per cent. Postwar evidence of the continuance of this tendency in France is provided by the surprising fact that the number of retail outlets in the country has increased by half a million since 1939. Without question a new world of workers is in process of creation—workers perhaps with a different psychology from that of those employed in economic enterprises organized on the staggering scale of an automobile plant or a munitions mill.

Whereas CGTFO may understandably lack interest in the development of new types of workers, who would be difficult to organize, no such ex-

cuses can be made for the Socialist Party. Some Socialists, in fact, have glimpsed the significance of these social changes. As early as 1947 Le-François, a Party theoretician of the Blumist school, was trying to convince his comrades that "in the France of today, independent of both capitalists and proletarians, there is a place in the modern state for a class of non-proletarian workers." He suggested that the Party should offer such a group "dignity and power." At the 1950 annual Congress, however, Jules Moch, then Minister of National Defense, undertook to challenge Party dogma on the structure and nature of its own social bases. Announcing courageously that he was proposing a full-scale reexamination of doctrine, Moch suggested that there was "a limit to the concentration of economic enterprises and to the proletarianization of the masses." He pointed out that more workers were employed in small shops supporting the automobile industry than in all of the huge plants actually manufacturing cars, and that the versatility and availability of newly developed tools and equipment was making it easier and easier for the worker to become a *petit propriétaire*. The program he suggested in view of these developments conformed to the traditional desires of the artisan and small producer—savings to halt inflation, subsidized investments in selected national undertakings, and the replacement of wholesale commercial suppliers with associations of small producers. For his trouble in presenting the following year an even more detailed platform of policies which would attract "the nonproletarian worker," Moch received considerable abuse from the Congress floor and pointedly failed of reelection to the directoral committee of the Party for the first time in years.³

If Moch's arguments distressed his more orthodox comrades, it cannot be denied that they were tailored not only to the evolution of the industrial population, but also to the following of the Party itself. In 1919 eleven departments which ranked among the highest of the top thirty of the Party's strongholds were industrial in character. By 1952 these eleven had all been replaced by lightly industrialized or predominantly agricultural departments. The only real working-class fiefdoms of the Socialists now appear to be the northern provinces and the Limoges region. Thoughtful men such as Blum, LeFrançois, Moch, and Professor Weill-Raynal have been attempting to reconcile the new social realities of modern France with what is seemingly the personal (if not the public) ideological bent of much of the membership. The doctrinal intransigence of the organization as a whole, however, has continued to prevent the resolution of the paradox plaguing the non-Communist left. The "reformists" have analyzed both the Party following and its interests with courage and care; but they have been continually rebuffed, although the politics, if not the doctrine, of the Party often conformed to their demands in particular points. Jacques Fauvet has remarked snidely of this puzzling incoherence that it only proves the Socialists think that a problem is solved when it is talked about.

A great opportunity would seem to exist for the Socialists to assume wholeheartedly the representation of the newly emerging social forces, but this requires a severe doctrinal break with the orthodoxies of Marx. On the other hand it can be argued that the French past is sufficiently rich in a socialist—or even revolutionary—tradition of its own to offer a satisfying ideological impetus to a new democratic interpretation of socialism. If the new type of worker is disturbed at the rigidities of Marxism, he is not necessarily lacking in interest in a social democracy that can be defined and propelled by leaders with a common purpose and a shrewd understanding of the security imperatives of many twentieth-century workers.

The Vestigial Strength of Syndicalist Philosophy

Any real metamorphosis to an admittedly democratic or Fabian form of socialism would have to include a direct assault, not only on the barricades of Marxist dogma but also on the ideological fortress of syndicalism, because without at least a small base of organized labor there could be little hope of such a movement becoming more than a pinkish radicalism. In this connection it should be remembered that the old differentiations between unskilled labor, clerical help, technical employees, and mechanics still exist in the minds of workingmen. There is little evidence that the leaders of CGTFO are prepared to admit that their union should concentrate on the recruitment of workers in service and supporting industries and in commerce. On the contrary, the doctrinaire concepts of syndicalism in general and of apoliticism in particular appear to be still flourishing and can be said to serve as useful slogans for the national leadership. In its 1950 Congress the CGTFO Union of the Paris area called for complete elimination of private ownership, the suppression of the salariat as a class, preparation of the working class for its mission of direct management of the nation's economy, and the absolute independence of the syndical movement in relation to all governments, political parties, philosophical sects, and religious faiths.

These sterile and unrealistic goals are not much different from Communist declamations. They unquestionably frighten away large numbers of less orthodox workers. By failing to provide a positive program of democratic solutions realizable in a meaningful political context, they risk disaffecting many potential supporters of a new socialist labor movement. Worse, by offering only sterile formulations designed in a past century, but at the same time maintaining a distinction between themselves and the Stalinists, the non-Communist unionists are often tempted to fall into a fatuous policy of pure anticommunism for want of more positive pursuits.

What French syndicalists—with the exception of the Communists—have refused to accept is the simple fact that their most loved dogma, apoliticism, has long been a completely unreal myth, certainly in regard to governments and probably also in regard to political parties. Few Syndi-

calists have recognized that the old formulas cannot apply in an economy in which the government must be deeply concerned—for fear often of its life—with the minutest variations of prices and wages in hundreds of industries. The effort of CGTFO leaders to discredit as political the strikes of the Communist-propelled CGT in support of Cominform propaganda neglects the obvious corollary that most major strikes in countries of straitened circumstances are political. The CGTFO-inspired strikes of August 1953 were political in so far as they were aimed at the downfall of the Laniel government, as a protest against his conservative economic policies. Furthermore, if the objectives of a strike include stringent economic requests in large industries, they will almost invariably in modern France require political adjustments to satisfy them. A corollary to this recognition of economic demands having political implications is that the demands must be pressed with some feeling of responsibility. And because little responsibility has been shown since the Liberation, many strikes have failed. Failure, in turn, means the fading away of all union strength.

No clearer warning exists that French labor must turn more and more to political *rapprochements* to realize the aspirations of the membership. For those who argue that direct action, i.e., the strike, is the ultimate weapon of syndicalism by which the financial power of the bourgeoisie can be balanced by the massed power of the workers, there need be only one answer. It can remain so without at the same time removing other avenues to agreement and satisfaction short of those by which the financial security of the State, and hence of all the workers, will be put at stake.

Two Paths at the Crossroads

There are at the moment of writing two possible courses open to the non-Communist left in France. One path, recognizing the increasing preponderance of conservative strength and recalling traditional policies under such circumstances, would be a closer and closer collaboration with the comrades of the Communist Party in order to present a solid opposition to the working classes' "traditional oppressors." This essay has attempted to show the dangers of such a course in destroying the personality of a movement which wishes to remain distinct from the Communists. It would be forever condemned to a minor role at the side of a more aggressive and less inhibited brother; furthermore there would be little opportunity to expand the base of the Party in recognition of new social realities. Eventually doubts and misgivings would destroy whatever *modus vivendi* had been concocted with the Communists, and the break would leave the democratic left more rootless and compromised than ever before. Although union cooperation with Communist locals for limited objectives may be possible in lightly industrialized areas where CP influence does not cast its shadow over every aspect of social and economic life, elsewhere such cooperation would lead to suffocation and ultimate disillusion.

The other possible strategy open to the non-Communist left has already been proposed by high-ranking militants. At the 1953 Congress of the Socialist Party, Secretary General Guy Mollet called for the foundation of a "Social and Democratic Front," embracing all men of the left devoted to the social Republic and opposed to Communist leadership. This vague formula was clarified a few months later by Mollet in a much publicized address, and the sentiments aired were given the tacit approval of CGTFO leadership by the warm endorsement of Jouhaux who shared the platform with Mollet. The Socialist leader condemned the Stalinists for preventing the formation of a left majority. He asked the collaboration of all workers, whether organized or not, members of cooperatives, "Christians but not clericals," and even Communists disillusioned with their leaders. The program demanded put a high priority on cheap housing, new division of the national income, end of the war in Indochina, reappraisal of North African policy, and a strong emphasis on European cooperation.

Thus Mollet had come a long way since 1947. He was, in fact, beckoning to all Republicans distressed with the immobility of the French political and economic situation. His program was not revolutionary, but it could appeal to wide elements of the public. So far there has been no formal response from any of the organizations or groups in question. Can it be that the Socialists are no longer capable of rallying the confidence of large masses because of their compromised past? It is significant that the only real break with the conservative grip on public policies for the past five years was, in mid-1954, entrusted not to a party or movement as such, but to an individual of bourgeois persuasions and a uniquely trust-inspiring personality—Mendès-France.

Weakness and clouded vision at CGTFO and at Socialist Party headquarters raises one last and even more menacing question. Will much of the working class—not only production laborers but also the new group of wage earners in supporting and service industries and those in commerce—lose their representative position in the society? It seems clear that those who have chosen so far to scorn the temptations of Communism will continue to remain indifferent to this siren. Lack of public confidence in the Socialists and the ineffectuality of CGTFO means, however, that there are only two ways for these workers to turn: to the apathy of total separation from public affairs or a footless attachment to any one of several bourgeois parties and social movements. This in turn will insure the capture of all France by the unreconstructed and essentially selfish middle class. Indeed, this may be the price of doctrinal intransigence and the closing shutter of the non-Communist perspective.

Footnotes to the Study

Chapter One. *The Political and Social Heritage of the Non-Communist Left*

1. D. THOMSON: *The Babeuf Plot*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947, p. 51.
2. See F. ENGELS: *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*.
3. Quoted in M. BUBER: *Paths in Utopia*. Translated by R. F. C. Hull. London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1949, p. 12.
4. E. DOLLÉANS: *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier, 1830-1936*, 2 vols. Paris, A. Colin, 1948, Vol. I, p. 118.
5. Translated from P. LOUIS: *Histoire du socialisme en France*, 5th ed. Paris, Rivière, 1950, p. 272.

Chapter Two. *The French Labor Movement and the Syndicalist Heritage*

1. J. RENNES: *Syndicalisme français*, Paris, Rivière, 1948, p. 151.
2. P. LOUIS: *Histoire du mouvement syndical en France*, 2 vols. Paris, Valois, 1948, Vol. I, p. 186.
3. E. BERTH: *Les Nouveaux Aspects du socialisme* (pamphlet), Paris, Rivière, 1908, p. 15.

Chapter Three. *Reformism and the Popular Front*

1. This estimate was worked out by H. W. EHLMANN in *French Labor from Popular Front to Liberation*, New York, Oxford University Press, Inc., 1947, p. 25.
2. Ehrmann, p. 39.
3. F. GOGUEL: *La Politique des partis sous la III^e République*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1946, p. 383.

Chapter Four. *Postwar Deflation of Socialism*

1. R. VERDIER: *La Vie clandestine du parti socialiste*, Paris, Editions de la Liberté, 1944, p. 5.
2. *Congrès extraordinaire des cadres des Fédérations Socialistes des 9, 10, 11, 12 septembre 1944: Comptes rendus*, Paris, 9 sept.
3. "Tactique Socialiste" in *Combat*, 15 Nov. 1946.

4. L. BLUM: *For All Mankind*, New York, The Viking Press, Inc., 1946, pp. 130-131.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.
6. L. LAURAT: "La Pénétration du Marxisme en France," *La Nef*, June-July 1950.
7. 38^e Congrès National SFIO, 29, 30, 31 août et 1 septembre 1946: *Comptes rendus*, 29 août, Paris.

Chapter Five. *Postwar Labor Divides*

1. See P. GIRAUD, "Défendons l'unité syndicale," *La Revue Socialiste*, Dec. 1946.
2. "L'Indépendance syndicale," *Force Ouvrière*, 24 Jan. 1946.
3. *Bulletin Économique*, Société d'études économique et documentaires, 12 Sept. 1947.
4. Editorial, *Force Ouvrière*, 25 Dec. 1947.
5. XXXIII^e Congrès National Corporatif de Paris, CGTFO, 12-13 avril 1948: *Compte rendu stenographié des débats*, Paris, Editions de la CGTFO, 1948. Statuts-préambule, p. 143.

Chapter Six. *The Third Force, Opposition, and Impoverishment*

1. "La Situation indochinoise," *Force Ouvrière*, 5 May 1949.
2. See the report on "Les Résolutions du Congrès—Indochine," *Le Populaire*, 30 May 1950.

Chapter Seven. *Myopia on the Non-Communist Left*

1. C. MORAZÉ: *La France bourgeoise, XVIII^e-XX^e siècles*, Paris, A. Colin, 1946, p. 99.
2. See for example J. Fourastié, *Le Grand espoir du XX^e siècle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950.
3. Moch's full speech may be found in 42^e Congrès National (SFIO) 26, 27, 28, 29 mai 1950: *Comptes rendus*, 27 mai, Paris.

Bibliographical Note

Although much of the record of doctrinal intransigence described in this essay is drawn from official records of the Socialist Party and the CGTFO, some more general sources are available. Most of these are in French, but a few excellent works in English also exist. Space affords mention of only an arbitrarily selected handful of each.

The most important surveys of the labor and Socialist movements in France are the basic works: E. DOLLEANS: *Histoire du mouvement ouvrier, 1830-1936*, 2 vols., 3rd ed., Paris, A. Colin, 1948; and PAUL LOUIS: *Histoire du mouvement syndical en France*, 2 vols., Paris, Valois, 1948; and the same author's *Histoire du socialisme en France*, 5th ed., Paris, Rivière, 1948. Also useful is M. PRELOR: *L'Evolution politique du socialisme français, 1789-1934*, Paris, Spes, 1939. A more recent but highly biased account of the history of French labor is G. LEFRANC: *Les Expériences syndicales en France de 1939 à 1950*, Paris, F. Aubier, 1950.

No adequate full treatments of the French Socialist Party's recent activities are available in English, although there are interesting and provocative sections devoted to this topic in ADOLPH STURMTHAL: *The Tragedy of European Labor, 1918-1939*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1943, and the same author's *Unity and Diversity in European Labor*, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1954. Highly useful is the brilliant essay by HENRY W. EHRLMANN, "The Decline of the Socialist Party" in *Modern France*, Ed. E. M. Earle. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1951. A brief but challenging analysis is offered by JOEL COLTON's article, "The French Socialist Party" in the *Yale Review*, Spring 1954. The most authoritative English works on French unionism are all of high caliber. The pioneer study was LOUIS LEVENE: *Syndicalism in France*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1912. The 1920s are well covered in D. J. SAPOSS: *The Labor Movement in Post-War France*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1931; and events to the end of the Second World War are keenly analyzed in the excellent study by H. W. EHRLMANN, *French Labor from Popular Front to Liberation*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1947. The best up-to-date treatment on French unionism is the long and thoughtful contribution by the best-informed and most lucid American observer, VAL LORWIN, in

WALTER GALENSON's compendium *Comparative Labor Movements*, New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952.

The ideological heritage of modern socialism and syndicalism can be traced from studies of individual philosophers and pamphleteers. There is certainly no shortage of such items, but one or two deserve special mention. These include the exciting and incisive essay, *The Babeuf Plot*, by DAVID THOMSON, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1947; H. ARVON: *L'Anarchisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951; and LÉON BLUM: *For All Mankind*, New York, The Viking Press, Inc., 1946. Shifts and eddies in socialist and syndicalist thought are well charted in A. SPIRE: *Le Déclin du Marxisme dans les tendances socialistes de la France contemporaine*, Paris, Recueil Sirey, 1937; and in R. GOETZ-GIREY: *La Pensée syndicale française*, Paris, A. Colin, 1948. The most brilliant critique of the modern impoverishment of Socialist philosophy is the as yet untranslated classic by MICHEL COLLINET, *La Tragédie du Marxisme*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1948. A companion piece is *L'Esprit du syndicalisme*, Paris, Éditions Ouvrières, 1951.

Material descriptive of the present socioeconomic conditions in French society must be gleaned from many sources, both analytical and interpretive. Special studies of the *Institut National de la Statistique* are sometimes helpful in this regard, as are the occasional periodical pieces by S. WEILL-RAYNAL in French journals. Of particular interest are RAYMOND ARON's "Social Structures and the Ruling Class," *British Journal of Sociology*, March 1950; the essays by JOHN SAWYER and JOHN CHRISTOPHER in *Modern France*, noted above; the Hoover Institute study, edited by Saul Padover, *French Institutions—Values and Politics*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1954; and in the same series MÉTRAUX and MEAD: *Themes in French Culture*. Sharp and interesting insights into the complicated social structure of postwar France are scattered throughout the Doubleday Short Study by EDGAR S. FURNISS, JR., *France: Keystone of Western Defense*, 1954.



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